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SAKUNTALA



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TORONTO

# SAKUNTALA

BY *KALIDASA*. PREPARED  
FOR THE ENGLISH STAGE BY  
*KEDAR NATH DAS GUPTA* IN  
A NEW VERSION WRITTEN BY  
*LAURENCE BINYON*

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY  
BY  
RABINDRANATH TAGORE



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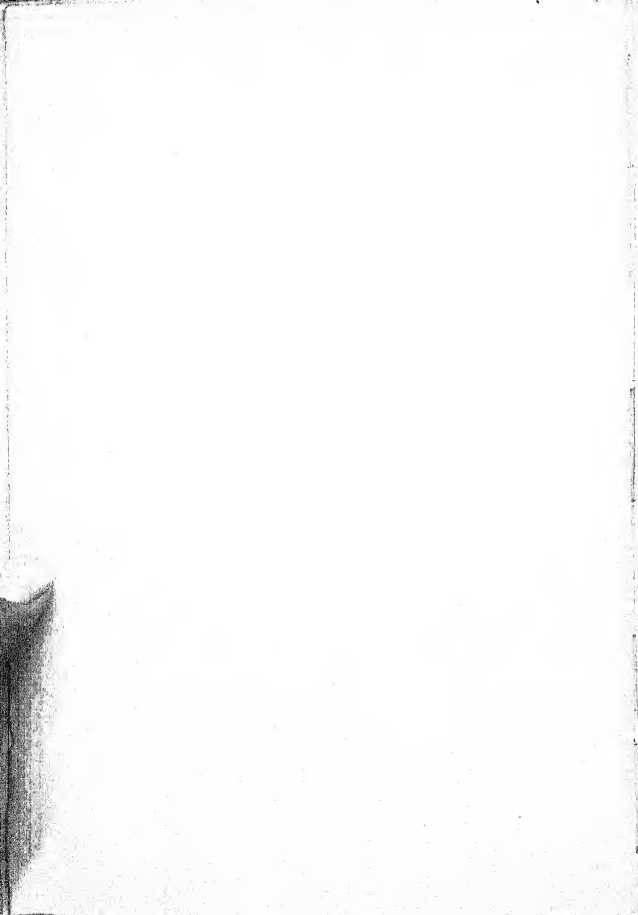
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TO

BHUPENDRANATH BASU



## THE PRESENT VERSION

THIS version of *Sakuntala* was made solely for the purpose of presenting the play on the stage to an English audience. This necessitated considerable abridgment. The original play is in seven acts, and the work of adaptation for our theatre has been done by Mr. Kedar Nath Das Gupta.

The original, as is well known, is in prose, frequently varied by stanzas of verse, written in different metres. Here, blank verse has for the most part been employed, as adherence to the sudden transitions of the original makes it difficult for European actors to preserve due continuity of mood

and atmosphere; the audience also being unprepared for this convention of literary tradition. Fidelity to what is universal in Kalidasa has been sought for, rather than the reproduction of exotic beauties.

L. B.

## KALIDASA

KALIDASA, the greatest of Indian poets, belonged to the post-Vedic period of Sanskrit literature. Owing to the absence of chronology in the history of the Ancient Hindus it was not possible, until recently, to fix his dates with any exactness. According to tradition he was one of the nine illustrious men of genius ("the nine gems") who adorned the court of Vikramaditya in 56 B.C. Another legend represents him as Matri Gupta, King of Kashmir. Scholars have differed widely in the dates to which they have assigned his activity. Professors Lassen and

Weber place him in the second century after Christ. According to Professor Max Müller and Dr. Bhandarkar he lived in the early part of the sixth century A.D. However, the date of Kalidasa has recently been conclusively settled by Dr. T. Bloch and Pandit Ramavatara Sharma. Working independently of each other in Europe and in India, they arrived at the same result. They have succeeded in proving from evidence, internal and external, that he flourished during the reign of Chandra Gupta II.—Vikramaditya—and of his son Kumara Gupta in the fourth century A.D. These dates have been officially accepted in India.

Kalidasa has written three plays: *Sakuntala*, *Vikramorvasi*, and *Malavikagnimitra*; two epics, *Raghuvamsa* and *Kumara Sambhava*; one lyrical poem, *Meghaduta*; and one descrip-

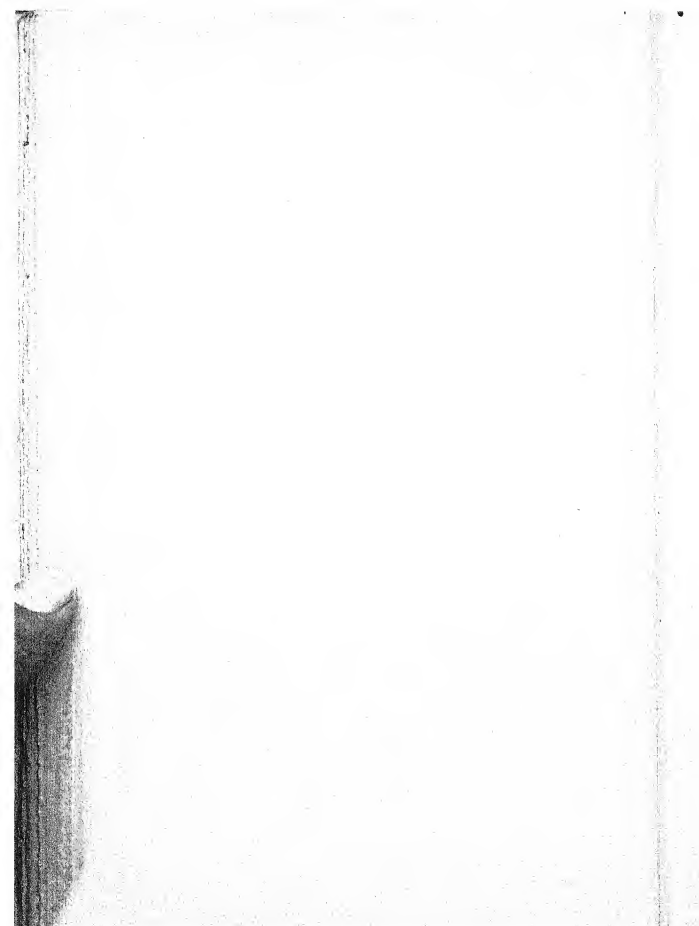
tive poem, *Ritusamhara*. Many other works, including an astronomical treatise, are said to have been written by him, but it is possible that later writers, more concerned for their poetry than for their own personal fame, assimilated their work to his.

There is no authentic life-history of Kalidasa, but there are many legends to which no historical value can be attached. Not much information can be gathered from his writing, as he rarely made personal allusions.

But what matters when Kalidasa was born or where he lived? He is of all countries and of all ages, and his work is the inheritance of mankind.

K. N. D. G.





# SAKUNTALA

## ITS INNER MEANING

By RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Would'st thou the young year's blossoms  
and the fruits of its decline,  
And all by which the soul is charmed,  
enraptured, feasted, fed,  
Would'st thou the Earth and Heaven itself  
in one sole name combine?  
I name thee, O Sakuntala! and all at  
once is said.

GOETHE.

GOETHE, the master-poet of Europe, has summed up his criticism of *Sakuntala* in a single quatrain; he has not taken the poem to pieces. This quatrain seems to be a small thing like the flame of a candle, but it lights up the whole drama in an instant, and reveals its inner nature. In Goethe's

words, *Sakuntala* blends together the young year's blossoms and the fruits of maturity; it combines heaven and earth in one.

We are apt to pass over this eulogy lightly as a mere poetical outburst. We are apt to consider that it only means in effect that Goethe regarded *Sakuntala* as fine poetry. But it is not really so. His stanza breathes not the exaggeration of rapture, but the deliberate judgment of a true critic. There is a special point in his words. Goethe says expressly that *Sakuntala* contains the history of a development—the development of flower into fruit, of earth into heaven, of matter into spirit.

In truth there are two unions in *Sakuntala*; and the *motif* of the play is the progress from the earlier union of the first Act, with its earthly unstable beauty and romance, to the higher union in the heavenly hermitage of eternal bliss described in the last Act. This drama was meant not for dealing with a particular passion, not for developing a particular character, but for

translating the whole subject from one world to another—to elevate love from the sphere of physical beauty to the eternal heaven of moral beauty.

With the greatest ease Kalidas has effected this junction of earth with heaven. His earth so naturally passes into heaven that we do not mark the boundary-line between the two. In the First Act the poet has not concealed the gross earthiness of the fall of Sakuntala; he has clearly shown, in the conduct of the hero and heroine alike, how much desire contributed to that fall. He has fully painted all the blandishments, playfulness, and fluttering of the intoxicating sense of youth, the struggle between deep bashfulness and strong self-expression. This is a proof of the simplicity of Sakuntala; she was not prepared beforehand for the outburst of passion which the occasion of Dushyanta's visit called forth. Hence she had not learned how to restrain herself, how to hide her feelings. Sakuntala had not known Cupid before; hence her heart was bare of armour, and she could not distrust

either the sentiment of love or the character of the lover. The daughter of the hermitage was off her guard, just as the deer there knew not fear.

Dushyanta's conquest of Sakuntala has been very naturally drawn. With equal ease has the poet shown the deeper purity of her character in spite of her fall—her unimpaired innate chastity. This is another proof of her simplicity.

The flower of the forest needs no servant to brush the dust off her petals. She stands bare ; dust settles on her ; but in spite of it she easily retains her own beautiful cleanliness. Dust did settle on Sakuntala, but she was not even conscious of it. Like the simple wild deer, like the mountain spring, she stood forth pure in spite of mud.

Kalidas has let his hermitage-bred youthful heroine follow the unsuspecting path of Nature ; nowhere has he restrained her. And yet he has developed her into the model of a devoted wife, with her reserve, endurance of sorrow, and life of rigid spiritual discipline. At the beginning, we see her self-forgetful and obedient to

Nature's impulses like the plants and flowers; at the end we see her deeper feminine soul—sober, patient under ill, intent on austerities, strictly regulated by the sacred laws of piety. With matchless art Kalidas has placed his heroine at the meeting-point of action and calmness, of Nature and Law, of river and ocean, as it were. Her father was a hermit, but her mother was a nymph. Her birth was the outcome of interrupted austerities, but her nurture was in a hermitage, which is just the spot where nature and austerities, beauty and restraint are harmonised. There is none of the conventional bonds of society there, yet we have the harder regulations of religion. Her *gandharva* marriage, too, was of the same type; it had the wildness of nature joined to the social tie of wedlock. The drama *Sakuntala* stands alone and unrivalled in all literature, because it depicts how Restraint can be harmonised with Freedom. All its joys and sorrows, unions and partings, proceed from the conflict of these two forces.

Sakuntala's simplicity is natural, that of

Miranda is unnatural. The different circumstances under which the two were brought up account for this difference. Sakuntala's simplicity was not girt round with ignorance, as was the case with Miranda. We see in the First Act that Sakuntala's two companions did not let her remain unaware of the fact that she was in the first bloom of youth. She had learnt to be bashful. But all these things are external. Her simplicity, on the other hand, is more deeply seated, and so also is her purity. To the very end the poet shows that she had no experience of the outside world. Her simplicity is innate. True, she knew something of the world, because the hermitage did not stand altogether outside society; the rules of home life were observed here too. She was inexperienced though not ignorant of the outside world; but trustfulness was firmly enthroned in her heart. The simplicity which springs from such trustfulness had for a moment caused her fall, but it also redeemed her for ever. This trustfulness kept her constant to patience, forgive-

ness, and loving kindness, in spite of the cruellest breach of her confidence. Miranda's simplicity was never subjected to such a fiery ordeal; it never clashed with knowledge of the world.

Our rebellious passions raise storms. In this drama Kalidas has extinguished the volcanic fire of tumultuous passion by means of the tears of the penitent heart. But he has not dwelt too long on the disease—he has just given a glimpse of it and then dropped the veil. The desertion of Sakuntala by the amorous Dushyanta, which in real life would have happened as the natural consequence of his character, is here brought about by the curse of Durvasa. Otherwise, the desertion would have been so extremely cruel and pathetic as to destroy the peace and harmony of the whole play. But the poet has left a small rent in the veil through which we can get an idea of the royal sin. It is in the Fifth Act. Just before Sakuntala arrives at court and is repudiated by her husband, the poet momentarily draws aside the curtain from the King's love affairs. A



woman's voice is heard singing behind the scene :

O honey-bee ! having sucked the mango-blossoms in your search for new honey, you have forgotten the recent loving welcome by the lotus !

This tear-stained song of a stricken heart in the royal household gives us a rude shock, especially as our heart was hitherto filled with Dushyanta's love-passages with Sakuntala. Only in the preceding Act we saw Sakuntala setting out for her husband's home in a very holy, sweet, and tender mood, carrying with herself the blessings of the hoary sage Kanwa and the good wishes of the whole forest world. And now a stain falls on the picture we had so hopefully formed of the home of love to which she was going.

When the jester asked, "What means this song ?" Dushyanta smiled and said, "We desert our loves after a short spell of love-making, and therefore I have deserved this strong rebuke from Queen Hansapadika." This indication of the fickleness

of royal love is not purposeless at the beginning of the Fifth Act. With masterly skill the poet here shows that what Durvasa's curse had brought about had its seeds in human nature.

In passing from the Fourth Act to the Fifth we suddenly enter a new atmosphere ; from the ideal world of the hermitage we go forth to the royal court with its hard hearts, crooked ways of love-making, difficulties of union. The beauteous dream of the hermitage is about to be broken. The two young hermits who are escorting Sakuntala, at once feel that they have entered an altogether different world, " a house encircled by fire ! " By such touches at the beginning of the Fifth Act, the poet prepares us for the repudiation of Sakuntala at its end, lest the blow should be too severe for us.

Then comes the repudiation. Sakuntala feels as if she had been suddenly struck with a thunderbolt. Like a deer stricken by a trusted hand, this daughter of the forest looks on in blank surprise, terror, and anguish. At one blow she is hurled

away from the hermitage, both literal and metaphorical, in which she has so long lived. She loses her connection with the loving friends, the birds, beasts, and plants, and the beauty, peace, and purity of her former life. She now stands alone, shelterless. In one moment the music of the first four Acts is stilled !

O the deep silence and loneliness that then surround her ! She whose tender heart has made the whole world of the hermitage her own folk, to-day stands absolutely alone. She fills this vast vacuity with her mighty sorrow. With rare poetic insight Kalidas has declined to restore Sakuntala to Kanwa's hermitage. After the renunciation by Dushyanta it was impossible for her to live in harmony with that hermitage in the way she had done before. . . . She was no longer her former self ; her relation with the universe had changed. Had she been placed again amidst her old surroundings, it would only have cruelly exhibited the utter inconsistency of the whole situation. A mighty silence was now needed, worthy of

the mighty grief of the mourner. But the poet has not shown us the picture of Sakuntala in the new hermitage—parted from the friends of her girlhood, and nursing the grief of separation from her lover. The silence of the poet only deepens our sense of the silence and vacancy which here reigned round Sakuntala. Had the repudiated wife been taken back to Kanwa's home, that hermitage would have spoken. To our imagination its trees and creepers would have wept, the two girl friends would have mourned for Sakuntala, even if the poet had not said a word about it. But in the unfamiliar hermitage of Marichi, all is still and silent to us; only we have before our mind's eye a picture of the world-abandoned Sakuntala's infinite sorrow, disciplined by penance, sedate, and resigned—seated like a recluse rapt in meditation.

Dushyanta is now consumed by remorse. This remorse is *tapasya*. So long as Sakuntala was not won by means of this repentance, there was no glory in winning her. . . . One sudden gust of youthful impulse had

in a moment given her up to Dushyanta, but that was not the true, the full winning of her. The best means of winning is by devotion, by *tapaysa*. What is easily gained is as easily lost. Therefore, the poet has made the two lovers undergo a long and austere *tapaysa* that they may gain each other truly eternally. If Dushyanta had accepted Sakuntala when she was first brought to his court, she would have only occupied a corner of the royal household, and passed the rest of her life in neglect, gloom, and uselessness.

It was a blessing in disguise for Sakuntala that Dushyanta abjured her with cruel sternness. When afterwards this cruelty reacted on himself, it prevented him from remaining indifferent to Sakuntala. His unceasing and intense grief fused his heart and welded Sakuntala with it. Never before had the King met with such an experience. Never before had he had the occasion and means of truly loving. Kings are unlucky in this respect; their desires are so easily satisfied that they never get what is to be gained by devotion alone.

Fate now plunged Dushyanta into deep grief and thus made him worthy of true love—made him renounce the rôle of a rake.

Thus has Kalidas burnt away vice in the eternal fire of the sinner's heart; he has not tried to conceal it from the outside. When the curtain drops in the last Act, we feel that all the evil has been destroyed as on a funeral pyre, and the peace born of a perfect and satisfactory fruition reigns in our hearts. Kalidas has internally cut right away the roots of the poison tree, which a sudden force from the outside had planted. He has made the physical union of Dushyanta and Sakuntala tread the path of sorrow, and thereby chastened and sublimated it into a moral union. Hence did Goethe rightly say that *Sakuntala* combines the blossoms of Spring with the fruits of Autumn, it combines Heaven and Earth. Truly in *Sakuntala* there is one Paradise Lost and another Paradise Regained.

The poet has shown how the union of Dushyanta and Sakuntala in the First

Act as mere lovers is futile, while their union in the last Act as the parents of Bharata is a true union. The First Act is full of brilliancy and movement. We have there a hermit's daughter in the exuberance of youth, her two companions running over with playfulness, the newly flowering forest creeper, the bee intoxicated with perfume, the fascinated King peeping from behind the trees. From this Eden of bliss Sakuntala, the mere sweetheart of Dushyanta, is exiled in disgrace. But far different was the aspect of the other hermitage where Sakuntala, the mother of Bharata and the incarnation of goodness took refuge. There no hermit girls water the trees, nor bedew the creepers with their loving sister-like looks, nor feed the young fawn with hand-fuls of paddy. There a single boy fills the loving bosom of the entire forest-world ; he absorbs all the liveliness of the trees, creepers, flowers, and foliage. The matrons of the hermitage, in their loving anxiety, are fully taken up with the unruly boy. When Sakuntala appears, we see her clad in a dusty robe, face pale with austerities,

doing the penance of a lorn wife, pure-souled. Her long penances have purged her of the evil of her first union with Dushyanta; she is now invested with the dignity of a matron, she is the image of motherhood, tender and good. Who can repudiate her now?

The poet has shown here, as in *Kumara Sambhava*, that the Beauty that goes hand in hand with Moral Law is eternal, that the calm, controlled, and beneficent form of Love is its best form, that beauty is truly charming under restraint and decays quickly when it gets wild and unfettered. This ancient poet of India refuses to recognise Love as its own highest glory; he proclaims that Goodness is the final goal of Love. He teaches us that the Love of man and woman is not beautiful, not lasting, not fruitful, so long as it is self-centred, so long as it does not beget Goodness, so long as it does not diffuse itself into society over son and daughter, guests and neighbours.

The two peculiar principles of India are the beneficent *tie of home life* on the one

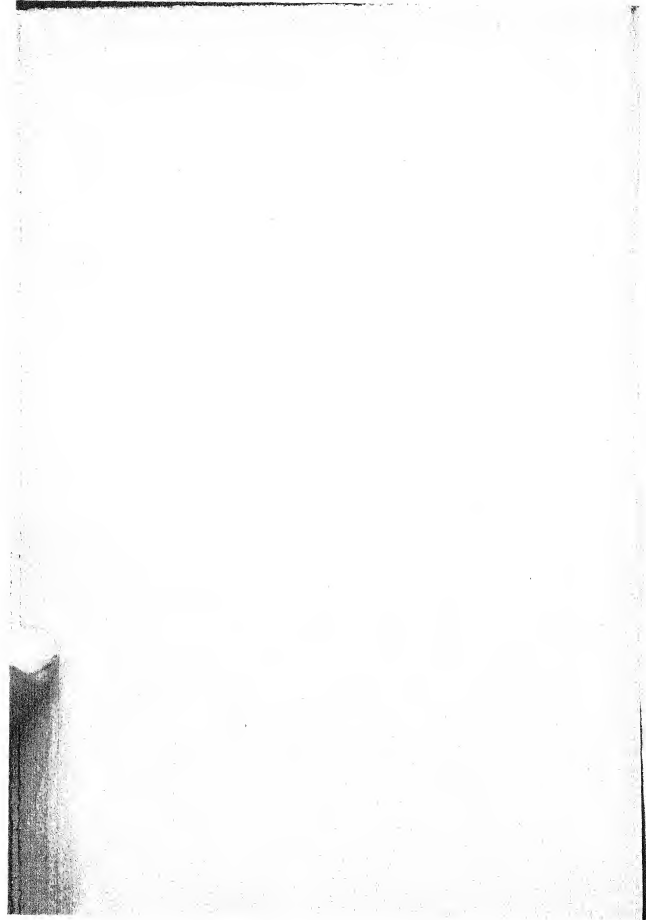


hand, and the *liberty of the soul* abstracted from the world on the other. In the world India is variously connected with many races and many creeds ; she cannot reject any of them. But on the altar of devotion (*tapaysa*) India sits alone. Kalidas has shown, both in *Sakuntala* and *Kumara Sambhava*, that there is a harmony between these two principles, an easy transition from the one to the other. In his hermitage a human boy plays with lion cubs, and the hermit spirit is reconciled with the spirit of the householder.

On the foundation of the hermitage of recluses Kalidas has built the home of the householder. He has rescued the relation of the sexes from the sway of lust and enthroned it on the holy and pure seat of asceticism. In the sacred books of the Hindus the ordered relation of the sexes has been defined by strict injunctions and Laws. Kalidas has demonstrated *that* relation by means of the elements of Beauty. The Beauty that he adores is lit up by grace, modesty, and goodness ; in its

intensity it is true to one for ever ; in its range it embraces the whole universe. It is fulfilled by renunciation, gratified by sorrow, and rendered eternal by religion. In the midst of this beauty, the impetuous unruly love of man and woman has restrained itself and attained to a profound peace, like a wild torrent merged in the ocean of goodness. Therefore is such love higher and more wonderful than wild and untrained Passion.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This article was originally written by the author in Bengali and was translated into English by Professor Jadunath Sarkar.



# SAKUNTALA

B

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

DUSHYANTA . . .	King of India.
SAENGARAYA } . . .	Hermits.
SARADVATA } . . .	
SAKUNTALA . . .	Foster-child of Kanwa.
HARITA } . . .	Pupils.
NARADA } . . .	
ANASUYA } . . .	{ Companions of Sakun-
PRIYAMVADA } . . .	
MATHAVYA . . .	Jester and Companion of the King.
KARABHAKA . . .	Messenger.
GAUTAMI . . .	Matron of the Hermit- age.
DURVASA . . .	A great Sage.
KANWA . . .	Chief of the Hermits.
CHAPLAIN.	
JANUKA . . .	1st Policeman.
SUCHAKA . . .	2nd Policeman.
FISHERMAN.	
CHIEF OF POLICE.	
MADHURIKA } . . .	Maidens.
TARALIKA } . . .	
CHAMBERLAIN.	
VETRAVATI . . .	Female Attendant.
MATALI . . .	Celestial Charioteer.
SUVRATA . . .	First Nurse.
SURAMA . . .	Second Nurse.
BHARATA . . .	Son of Dushyanta.

## PROLOGUE

(*Discovers the STAGE MANAGER*)

STAGE MAN.        (*Looking towards the Tiring-room*) Lady,  
when your tiring is complete, will it  
please you to come this way.

(*Enter ACTRESS*)

ACTRESS. I am here, sir; what is your command?

MAN.        We are before the eyes of a discerning  
audience, and have to present before  
them a new drama by Kalidasa called  
*Sakuntala*, or *The Ring of Recognition*.  
Let each actor endeavour to do his best.

ACTRESS. You, sir, have so wisely assigned  
the cast, that nothing will go amiss.

MAN.        Call not the actor perfect in his art

Till the true judge approves him ;  
failing this  
Though he be never so severely  
schooled,  
His skill will be distrustful of itself.

ACTRESS. How shall I begin ?

MAN. First charm the ears of this assembly.

ACTRESS. For the theme of my song, what  
season shall I choose ?

MAN. Why not sing about the pleasant  
summer coming on ?—

Now is the season when pools are  
sweet to the bather, now

The wind thro' the forest flows  
Fragrant from trumpet-flowers that  
hang from the leafy bough,

And the hush of the shadow grows,  
Luring the heart in quiet to dream  
the hours away,

And luring the limbs to repose,  
Happy at noon, but happiest when  
the long burning day  
Sinks to its heavenly close.

ACTRESS.

(Sings)

In the dusk, as it falls  
On the last golden hour,  
The enamoured maiden  
Takes a honeyed flower.

She holds it before her  
In the dim room,  
Before the mirror, burning  
With her cheeks' bloom.

A flower the bees kiss,  
Part and kiss, hovering near ;  
Its tendrils light as finger-tips  
She twines about her ear.

MAN.

Excellent ! Your song holds the  
audience spell-bound in pleasure, and  
they sit motionless as in a picture.  
What shall we do to keep their  
good-will ?

ACTRESS.

Shall we not present the play that  
you announced but now—*Sakuntala* ?



MAN.

Well reminded !

Your song bewitched my thoughts, as  
in our play

The fawn that lured the ardent King  
astray.

ACT I

SCENE I

*A Forest*

(KING DUSHYANTA *armed with a bow and arrow follows an antelope and takes aim*)

VOICE      Hold, O King, kill it not, kill it not !  
BEHIND  
SCENES.

(*Enter a HERMIT with two others*)

HERMIT. (*Raising his hand*)

This deer, O King, is from our hermit-  
age.

Ah, never let that cruel arrow pounce  
Upon the tender body of a fawn !  
What has bright steel to do with the  
frail life

Of deer ? As well might you fling  
flame on flowers.

The steel should seek some kindred  
adamant.

Withhold that aim ! Your weapon's  
office is

To champion the distressed, not maim  
the innocent.

KING. (*Replaces the arrow in its quiver*)

The shaft is in its quiver.

HERMIT.

Noble act !

Worthy of a Prince, the glory of  
Puru's race.

HERMITS. (*Raising their hands*)

Heaven bless you with a son, whose  
happy realm

Shall be all earth between the border-  
ing seas.

KING. (*Bowing*)

I thank you for that blessing.

HERMIT.

We, great prince,

Go forth to gather sacrificial wood

In the forest. Yonder, on Malini's  
banks,

Close by, Sage Kanwa has his hermit-  
age.

If other duty calls you not away,  
Accept our hospitality, and enter.

KING. Is the great Saint within the hermit-  
age ?

HERMIT. He has gone on pilgrimage ; for  
Destiny

Threatens with some obscurity of ill  
Sakuntala, his daughter ; and he  
seeks

By meet propitiation to avert it.  
But he has laid the charge on her,  
meanwhile,

KING. Duly to entertain all coming guests.  
She will acquaint me with the Sage's  
acts

Of penance and devotion.

HERMIT. We then go  
Upon our errand, King.

(*Exeunt* HERMITS)

KING.

In such a spot,  
To breathe is to be purer. All be-  
speaks  
The precinct of a grove that's sacred.  
None  
Should rudely break into this hermit-  
age.  
Modest should be his clothing and his  
mien.

*(He lays aside his bow and his jewels)*

How exquisite a peace is in this place !  
What does it mean, this throbbing in  
my arm,  
As if it felt, near to the troubled  
heart  
Beauty that takes all peace away !  
How idle,  
In such a place, so fond an omen !  
And yet  
Destiny has doors open everywhere.  
This way, dear companions, this way.

VOICE  
BEHIND  
SCENES.

KING. Voices ! Upon the right of yonder  
trees !  
I'll walk toward where the sound is.  
Ah, they come !  
It is the maidens of the Hermitage  
Coming to water the young trees of  
the grove.  
What grace is in their motion ! Never  
such  
Is seen in pillared courts of palaces ;  
The wild-wood bloom outglows the  
garden flower.  
I'll hide myself among the trees, and  
watch them.

*(Enter SAKUNTALA with her two companions)*

SAKUN. Anasuya ! Priyamvada ! Come this  
way !

ANAS. One would imagine, dear Sakuntala,  
That Father Kanwa had more care for  
the trees  
Of the hermitage than for you. You  
are delicate

As a jasmin blossom, yet on you he  
lays  
The duty and the task of watering  
them.

SAKUN. This duty is my delight. These are  
my sisters,  
My silent leafy sisters. They speak not,  
And yet I vow they feel me near to  
them.

PRIYAM. Sakuntala, we have watered all the  
trees  
That blossom in the summer. Now  
let's sprinkle  
Those that are past their flowering ;  
better deed  
Is this, because it looks not for reward.

SAKUN. Priyamvada, you have drawn my  
dress too tight ;  
Loosen it a little, will you ?

PRIYAM. (*Smiling*). It is not I  
That you should blame ; youth, it is  
budding youth !  
Girls blossom into women.

SAKUN.

Look, friends, look,  
The Kesara tree is beckoning with his  
boughs  
Like fingers in the wind ; he wants to  
speak,  
To tell me something. I must go to  
him.

PRIYAM. Sakuntala, stand still a moment.

SAKUN.

Why ?

PRIYAM. While you are bending so about its  
stem,  
The Kesara seems embracing you,  
as if  
He took to him some lovely vine for  
bride.

SAKUN. Priyamvada, Priyamvada, well they  
named you.

Your name means flatterer, and you  
act the name.

KING.

Flattery is mere truth,  
Her lips are a young bud  
In colour, and her arm



Slim as a flower-stem. Youth  
With all its magic charm  
Blossoms within her blood.

ANAS. Sakuntala, see, here is the young  
jasmine  
You called The Moonlight of the  
Forest ; see,  
She has chosen the Mango for her own  
bridegroom.

Have you forgotten her ?

SAKUN. Forgotten ? I ?  
How lovely a season for their union  
this !  
The Moonlight of the Forest is all  
flowers,  
All youth ; and like a bridegroom  
newly-drest,  
The Mango takes and holds her to his  
breast.

PRIYAM. Anasuya, why do you think Sakuntala  
Looks upon Forest-Moonlight so in-  
tently ?

ANAS. Why ?

PRIYAM. She is wishing, as the jasmine's  
wedded  
To her own tree, so may she also find  
A husband worthy of her dreams of  
him.

SAKUN. (*Pouring water*)

You are speaking your own wish.

ANAS.

Sakuntala,

Here is the wild vine that your Father  
tended

With his own hands, just as he tended  
you.

SAKUN. Wonderful ! Wonderful !

PRIYAM. What is it ?

SAKUN.

Look,

It's not the season, yet the wild vine's  
full

Of little buds, down to the very root.

PRIYAM. } Can it be ?  
ANAS. }

PRIYAM. Joy ! There's blessing in such news,  
For Father Kanwa said that when  
this vine

Flowered, it should mean your bridal  
was at hand.

ANAS. Priyamvada, that is why Sakuntala  
Waters her tender vine so lovingly.

SAKUN. She is my sister; how should I not  
love her?

*(She continues her watering)*

A bee! A bee has flown from the  
young jasmine,  
And it is trying to settle on my face.

ANAS. Fancying it to be a lotus-bloom.

SAKUN. Help!

PRIYAM. What can *we* do? Call on Dushyanta.  
It is the King protects this sacred  
grove.

KING. My cue is aptly given to me.

*(Advancing hastily)* Fear not!  
Who dares molest the gentle maids  
that keep  
This hermitage—the more, since he  
who rules

The earth is of the moon-descended  
race,  
Swift to chastise the wanton trespasser ?

*(All look at the KING and all are embarrassed)*

ANAS. Sir, it is nothing more terrible than a  
bee  
That teased our friend and half-  
affrighted her.

KING. *(Turning to SAKUNTALA)*  
I trust the dwellers in this hermitage  
Have suffered no disturbance in the  
rites  
They dedicate their days to in this  
grove ?  
Is all well with you ?

*(SAKUNTALA stands confused and silent)*

PRIYAM. Well, indeed, all well,  
Now that so noble a guest has  
honoured us.

Go, dear Sakuntala; bring from the  
cell

An offering of flowers, and rice, and  
fruit.

This water we have brought with us  
will serve

To wash the feet of this most honoured  
guest.

KING. Such gracious speech already has per-  
formed

Whatever hospitable rites enjoin.

PRIYAM. Sit then, kind Sir, in the cool shade  
of this tree.

KING. You, too, must all be wearied with  
your tasks.

*(All sit down together)*

SAKUN. *(Aside)*

Why does my heart begin to beat so  
fast

Beholding him? What am I guilty  
of?

It was not so within the hermitage.

KING. (*Gazing at them all by turns*)  
What charm is in a friendship of one  
age,  
And all young ; it is like a chime rung  
true.

ANAS. Noble Sir, words so gracious hearten  
me  
To ask what royal lineage our guest  
Adorns, what country mourns his  
absence now,  
And what leads one so delicately  
nurtured  
So weary a journey to this grove of  
penance ?

KING. The great King, Puru's long-descended  
heir,  
Charges me with the care and main-  
tenance  
Of justice and religion ; I am come  
To be assured the hermits of this  
grove  
Suffer no hindrance of their holy  
rites.

ANAS. We and our grove then have a guardian now !

(SAKUNTALA gazes bashfully at the KING)

(Perceiving the state of her feelings and of the KING'S. Aside to SAKUNTALA)

Sakuntala, if but our Father Kanwa  
Were here to-day !

SAKUN. What if he were ?

PRIYAM. He would  
Do honour to his guest and offer him  
The one possession that he prizes most.

SAKUN. I will not listen to you.

KING. Is it permitted  
For me to ask concerning this your  
friend ?

ANAS. We are honoured, Sir.

KING. The sage, I have been told,  
Has ever lived the unwedded hermit  
life ;  
How is it this your friend is called his  
daughter ?

ANAS. Sir, I will tell you. Have you not  
heard tell  
Of a renowned Sage, Viswamitra, one  
Sprung from a royal lineage ?

KING. I have.

ANAS. He is the real father of our friend ;  
But when her mother had forsaken  
her,  
The venerable Kanwa took the child  
And bred her as his own.

KING. But how—forsaken ?  
And by her mother ? Tell me the  
whole tale  
From the beginning.

ANAS. Know then, on a time  
When, by the shores of the Gautami's  
stream,  
The royal saint was strengthening his  
soul  
With penance of prolonged austerities,  
The Devas, jealous of his spirit's  
power,



Sent the nymph Menaka, charged to  
seek him out  
To trouble his devotions.

KING.

So much dread

Deities have of that transcendent  
power  
Which mortals win from high  
austerities.  
And then ?

ANAS.                   The holy Viswamitra, gazing  
On the enchanting beauty of that  
                                nymph—  
It was the season's glory, the full  
                                spring. . . .

*(Stops short and appears confused)*

KING. Sakuntala is the nymph's child ?

ANAS. Even so.

KING. One might divine the truth from what  
she is.  
A mortal mother never bore such  
beauty.

It is from heaven the radiant lightning  
comes.

She is then of like lineage with myself.  
My wishes bud and blossom into hope.

PRIYAM. (*Looking with a smile at SAKUNTALA, and then  
turning towards the KING*)

But, sir, you would ask further ?

(*SAKUNTALA makes a chiding gesture  
with her finger*)

KING.

Truly guessed.

So eager am I to hear all of this  
Your world-sequestered life, that I  
would ask

One thing more.

PRIYAM.

Hesitate not. We who lead

The life of hermits have but to be  
asked,

For all our ways are open.

KING.

Is it but till she is wed that this your  
friend

Must keep the hermitage's virgin vow ?  
Or must she dwell for ever with the  
fawns

That have eyes dark and innocent as  
hers ?

PRIYAM. It is her foster-father's wish to give  
her

In marriage to a husband worthy of  
her.

SAKUN. Anasuya, I shall leave you.

ANAS. Why ?

SAKUN. To tell

The venerable Gautami what folly  
Priyamvada's idle tongue betrays her  
to. *(She rises)*

ANAS. Surely it were offence to leave a guest  
Of so much note and honour without  
dues  
Of hermit hospitality fulfilled ?

*(SAKUNTALA without answering a word,  
moves away)*

PRIYAM. *(Approaching SAKUNTALA)*

Dear girl, you must not go.

SAKUN. Why must I not ?

PRIYAM. There are two trees that must be watered yet.

You promised ; go when you have paid your debt—

Not before ! *(Forces her to turn back)*

KING. Spare her, gentle damsel, this. She has already toiled enough, too much.

This debt of hers is paid, if I may pay it.

*(He gives PRIYAMVADA a ring. She takes it, reads the name engraved on it, and they look at each other)*

Mistake not. This was the King's gift.

PRIYAM. Then, Sir, You should not part with such a gift.

Your word

Suffices ; the debt's paid.

ANAS. Sakuntala,  
This noble stranger, nay, the King himself

Discharges what you promised. Now  
you are free.

*(She gives back the ring)*

PRIYAM. Why linger ?

SAKUN. What right have you, now to keep  
And now dismiss me ?

KING. *(Looking at SAKUNTALA, to himself)*

Does she feel as I ?  
Altho' she mingles no words with my  
speech  
Yet all her body listens to my voice.  
And though her eyes look not into  
my eyes  
There's nothing else that they are  
fastened on.

VOICE. *(Without)*

Hermits, defend the creatures of our  
grove !  
Make ready ! King Dushyanta, close  
at hand,  
Comes this way hunting ; and an  
elephant,

Affrighted by the chariot of the  
King,  
Tramples into our hermitage.

KING.

Alas !

My retinue, hastening in search of  
me,  
Have broken, I fear, into this sacred  
grove.

PRIYAM. Such alarms frighten us. O permit  
it, Sire,  
That we return !

KING.           Go, gentle damsels, fear not,  
                  There shall no harm come; it shall  
                  be my care.

ANAS.     So poor a hospitality ashes,  
               Or we would plead that, better chance  
               befalling,  
 A second visit be vouchsafed to  
               us.

KING. Your speech is all too modest. I am  
honoured  
Merely beholding you.

SAKUN.

O Anasuya,  
I am trapped ; my dress is caught  
upon a thorn ;  
Wait for me while I loosen it.

*(She casts lingering glances at the KING  
as she departs with her maidens)*

KING.

They are gone,  
And I go also. To the city ? No !  
I have no more desire now to return.  
My men shall camp near by the grove.  
My heart,  
I cannot tear it from Sakuntala.

CURTAIN

## SCENE II

*A Plain on the Skirts of the Forest*

*(Enter MATHAVYA in melancholy mood)*

MATH.

*(Sighing)* Ah ! what a miserable fate  
is mine ! I am worn to a shadow by  
waiting on this mad huntsman of a

King. "Here's a deer"; "there's a boar"; "Yonder's a tiger"! That's all we talk of. Nothing stops him; not even the heat of the noon. He must needs chase from jungle to jungle by paths that have scarce a strip of shade. For drink, nothing but warm, stinking water from the mountain brooks, bitter with rotten leaves. For food, nothing but the game we roast on spits, swallowed at any chance moment. Even at night there's no rest; such an uproar of horses and elephants! And who could sleep with his bones all out of joint from the endless galloping? I doze, and then at peep of dawn I am wakened by the hubbub of the beaters—rascally slaves!—surrounding the wood before sunrise; a deafening clatter and chatter! And even that's not the end of the story. There's a new boil growing on the old one.



Yesterday in his headlong hunting he left us all behind, and in a hermitage whom should he discover, as ill-luck contrived it, but a beautiful hermit-girl, called Sakuntala! From that moment there's never a thought of going back to the city! He slept not a wink all night for thinking of this damsel. What's to be done? I must be on the watch for my friend. Ah! here he comes, with a girl hidden in his heart. Come, I'll pretend to be crippled. Perhaps I can wheedle a little rest out of him this way.

*(He stands leaning on his staff)*

*(Enter the KING)*

KING. *(To himself)*

My love's not easily to be won; yet still

Her glance, her gesture, make my heart beat high.

Oh, though opposing mountains stand between,

There's bliss in the deep longings they  
divide.

There was a tenderness in her eyes,  
although

They were averted ; and her steps  
lingered ;

And sudden came her chiding word  
when she

Made as to leave us, and her friend  
detained her.

Because of me these things were.

*(Smiling)*

O how love

Spells out of every sign the sense he  
craves !

MATH. *(Standing as before)* I can't salute you  
with my hand, Sire. I have only a  
voice to greet you with.

KING. Why, what has paralysed your  
limbs ?

MATH. Do you hit me in the eye, and then  
ask the cause of my tears ?

KING. I do not understand. Speak plainly !

MATH. When a reed is bent down like a briar, is it the reed's fault, or the river's ?

KING. Why, the river's.

MATH. Just so are you the cause of my crippled limbs.

KING. How so ?

MATH. Ever since you left the affairs of your Kingdom to take care of themselves, and live the life of a wild man in this savage region, I have no more control of my poor limbs : their joints are so horribly bruised by this eternal chasing of wild beasts. I beg of you this favour : Let me off for one day only to have some rest.  
*(Looking in the KING's face who remains silent)*  
I might cry out to the air, for any heed you pay to my petition. No doubt you have something else in your mind.

KING. *(Smiling)* What else should I have in my mind ? Am I one to be deaf to

the word of a friend ? I have something more to say to you.

MATH. Well, Sire ?

KING. When you are rested, you must help me in another task. It will not tire you.

MATH. In eating some savoury dish, I hope.

KING. Mathavya, your eyes have never yet been truly feasted ; for you have not seen the loveliest of all beings.

MATH. I see your Majesty before my eyes.

KING. Every one considers his own friend perfect—but I am speaking of the brightest jewel of these holy groves.

MATH. You cannot woo her. She is a hermit-girl. What is the use of thinking about her ?

KING. Fool ! Dushyanta's thoughts dwell on no forbidden thing.

MATH. (*Laughing*) You are like one who wearies of sweet dates and craves for the shrewd taste of a tamarind. In your mad longing for this girl,

you despise all the beauties of your palace.

KING. You, my friend, have not seen her.

MATH. She must indeed be enchanting to have taken the King's heart captive.

KING. Ah, my friend! . . . She needs not many words.

Did God create some picture of perfection

And then breathe into it his breath of life ?

Or did the mind choose each rare element

Of beauty, and compound them in one form,

Sakuntala, the unsurpassable ?

God bettered all his best in moulding her.

She is a flower whose perfume none has smelt ;

A spring shoot on the branch, unbruised, unfingered ;

A jewel never chiselled, never pierced ;

Fresh honey, that no lip has tasted  
of !

She is the uttermost reward of life  
Perfected in the grace of its good  
deeds.

But who knows what rare mortal  
Destiny  
Chose for the rapture of possessing  
her ?

MATH. Well, then, make haste to her  
rescue, before she falls into the hands  
of some pious oily-headed peasant.

KING. She cannot dispose of herself ; and  
her guardian is away on a pilgrimage.

MATH. And did she look graciously upon  
you ?

KING. The hermit-maidens are by nature  
timid ;

And yet—

When I was near, she drew her gaze  
away.

She smiled as if she knew not why she  
smiled.

Love, shy with modesty, shone clouded  
out,  
Then hid its secret radiance in a  
veil.

MATH. Did you expect her to fly to your  
arms the first time she saw you ?

KING. But when she went away with her  
companions,  
She in that moment almost showed  
she loved me,  
For hardly had she left me when she  
turned  
Her face, and, busy, feigned to free  
her skirt,  
Dissembling it was caught upon a  
thorn ;  
But there was no thorn on the bush  
she stooped to.

MATH. The grove of penance, I perceive,  
has become for you the grove of  
pleasure. Our stay here is like  
to be long. I hope there is food  
enough.

KING. My friend, think of some pretext under which we may revisit the hermitage.

MATH. What pretext is wanted? Are you not the King?

KING. Well!

MATH. Say you have come for the sixth part of their rice, which they owe you for tribute.

KING. Foolish fellow! These hermits, by the fruits of their penances, pay me a very different kind of tribute, which I value more than baskets of gold and jewels.

*(Enter two HERMITS)*

HERMITS. All Hail, O King!

KING. *(Rising from his seat)* I too salute you both.

1ST HER. Heaven bless your Majesty!

*(They offer fruits)*

KING. *(Respectfully receiving the offering)* Tell me, I pray you, your errand.



2ND HER. The dwellers in this hermitage, having heard of your Majesty's sojourn in our neighbourhood, make this petition.

KING. Say command, rather.

2ND HER. In the absence of the great Sage Kanwa, evil demons are troubling our sacrificial rites. Deign, therefore, to stay awhile within our hermitage.

KING. I am honoured by your request.

MATH. Could anything come more opportune ?

KING. (*Bowing to the HERMITS*) Revered Hermits, I will follow you immediately.

HERMITS. May victory attend you ! (*Exeunt*)

KING. My dear Mathavya, are not you full of longing to see this maiden ?

MATH. To tell you the truth, just now I was overflowing with desire to see her ; but since this news came about the demons, it has quite dried up.

KING. Do not fear. You will be with me.

MATH. I shall keep close to your chariot-wheel.

(Enter KARABHAKA)

KARA. Victory to your Majesty! The queen - mother sends her commands. . . .

KING. My mother—what are her commands?

KARA. The Queen bids me say that on the fourth day from this a solemn ceremony will be held for her son's welfare. On that day it is meet that we be honoured by his illustrious presence.

KING. Here is perplexity. On the one hand, the commission of these holy men to be performed; and on the other, the command of my revered mother to be obeyed. Both duties too sacred to be neglected. How can they be reconciled?

MATH. You will have to poise yourself between them like King Trisanku,

who was suspended between Heaven and Earth because the Sage Viswamitra commanded him to mount up to Heaven, and the gods ordered him down again.

KING. Truly my mind is divided. (*He reflects*) The queen-mother has ever received you as a son. Do you return, tell her what duty to the hermits detains me, and perform the ceremonies in my place.

MATH. With the greatest pleasure in the world; but you don't for a moment suppose that I am afraid of those demons?

KING. (*Smiling*) A great Brahmin like you! It is inconceivable.

MATH. I must travel in a manner befitting the younger brother of a King.

KING. Yes, I shall send my retinue with you, That this pure grove may be disturbed no more.

Now let the plunging buffalo wallow  
at ease,  
And shake the water from his heavy  
horns,  
And the shy deer, clustered beneath  
the shade  
In gentle troops, unstartled chew the  
cud.  
The wild boar with his tusks may  
wrench the reed  
Among the oozy marshes at his will.  
For this my bow bends to my hand  
no more,  
And the slack string sleeps idle on the  
bow.

MATH.      (*Strutting about*) Aha! Haven't I the  
air of a young prince?

KING.      (*To himself*) This giddypate is too  
talkative. He might betray me. (*He  
takes MATHAVYA's hand. Aloud*) Friend Ma-  
thavya, think not that anything but  
my reverence for the hermits attracts  
me to the hermitage.

A girl bred by a hermit with the  
fawns—

What can she be to an enthroned  
king?

If for a whim I feigned a moment's  
passion,

Think it a jest, a bubble blown to air.

MATH. Oh, I understand. (Exit)

CURTAIN

### SCENE III

#### *The Hermitage*

(Enter SAKUNTALA with her two friends)

PRIYAM. Let us rest here awhile. The tree's  
cool shade

Invites us.

ANAS. Tell me, dear Sakuntala,  
Are you not better when we fan you so  
With the lotus leaves?

SAKUN. Why do you trouble to fan me ?

(PRIYAMVADA and ANASUYA look sorrowfully at one another)

(Enter KING)

KING. My eyes have found their heaven. I  
will hear  
What they are saying so soft to one  
another.

PRIYAM. (*Aside to ANASUYA*)  
Anasuya, it is ever since that hour  
When first the good king met us in the  
wood  
Sakuntala has been pining. May not he  
Be that which makes her ail ?

ANAS. I have thought it too.  
Sakuntala, I want to ask you some-  
thing.  
Your sickness has gone deep, deep to  
the heart.

SAKUN. (*Half rising*)  
What is the thing that you were  
going to ask ?

ANAS. You have not told us what is in your  
mind,  
But I have heard old stories of  
romance,  
And it comes to me that perhaps your  
state  
Is that of those in love. Tell us what  
ails you ?  
Who can devise the remedy, unless  
He understand the way of the dis-  
ease ?

KING. They speak my own thoughts.

PRIYAM. Why do you hide your illness ?  
Anasuya says well. Every day you  
pine  
And waste away. You are nothing  
but a shadow,  
A beautiful shadow.

SAKUN. (*Sighing*) To whom else but you  
Should I confide what ails me, my  
dear friends ?  
And yet it would but weary you to  
hear.

ANAS. Nay, know we must. A sorrow shared  
with friends,  
Loving friends, loses half its bitter-  
ness.

SAKUN. Ever since my eyes beheld him—the  
good king  
Who guards our grove and watches  
over us—

*(She stops embarrassed)*

ANAS. Speak on !

SAKUN. I love him. It is this that ails me.

PRIYAM. You have found a lover worthy of  
yourself.

So run the mighty rivers to the sea.

KING. *(Joyfully)*

I have heard the thing that I most  
longed to hear.

SAKUN. Then you must cause the King to  
have pity on me,

Or, ere long, these your arms will  
carry me

Dead on my bier.



PRIYAM. Love has smitten her very hard.  
How should we blame her, that her  
heart is fixed  
Upon a hope so high, upon a king  
Of Puru's race, and the glory of that  
race ?

ANAS. Our hearts are with you, wishing you  
all joy,  
Dearest Sakuntala. The frail wild-  
vine  
Clings to the Mango, for that royal  
tree  
Alone has strength to stay and comfort  
it.  
But how to accomplish quick and  
secretly  
The heart's desire of our Sakuntala ?

PRIYAM. " Quick " is not hard, but " secretly "  
is hard.  
That knot needs thought for its un-  
tying.

ANAS. How so ?

PRIYAM. Have you not seen the King's eyes ?  
Love in them  
Betrayed itself all burning. These  
last days  
Have not his features wasted, as if  
sleep  
Had quite forsaken him ?

KING. It is most true.

PRIYAM. (*Thoughtfully*) I have a thought, Anasuya.

ANAS. Tell me.

PRIYAM. This.

Sakuntala shall write a love-letter  
Hidden in a flower. I will contrive  
to drop it  
In the King's path. He will mistake  
it surely  
For the relic of some offering, and  
pick up  
The fallen flower.

ANAS. A pretty plan ! The thought  
Pleases me. But what says Sakuntala ?

SAKUN. I must consider before saying yes.

PRIYAM. Could you not make some song, and  
in the verse

Breathe something of the pain that  
fills your heart ?

SAKUN. I will try. But my heart, my heart  
trembles !

If he were to know all and to despise  
me !

PRIYAM. You fear scorn from a heart that  
pines for you.

ANAS. You are too modest, and too fearful.  
Who,

When fever racks him, shuns the  
blessed moon

Whose beams alone can heal him ?

SAKUN. (*Smiling*)

It seems I must obey ; but how to  
write

When I have nothing I can write upon ?

PRIYAM. Here is a lotus-leaf, feel, it is smooth  
As the deep down upon a parrot's  
breast.

Write a verse on it with your finger-  
nail.

KING. I would not rob my vision by one  
blink

Of what it feeds on, as she writes  
absorbed

With the one eyebrow lifted, and her  
cheek

Thrilling, as her heart pours into her  
hand.

SAKUN. I have thought out a verse, a little  
song.

Listen !

PRIYAM. }  
ANAS. } We are all ears, to drink it in.

SAKUN. (*Reads*)

Your heart to me is dark ; yet day  
and night,

Cruel one, Love enfevers me anew

With yearning and unending thought  
of you,

In whom is closed all hope and all  
delight.

KING.

*(Advancing)*

Lovely one, you Love with his fever  
fills,

But not, as me, consumes, destroys,  
devours.

Day glares upon the parching lotus-  
flowers,

But the wan moon he withers and he  
kills.

Nay, rise not, move not ! Rest you  
yet awhile

There in the fragrance that those  
limbs have crushed

From the sweet lotus ; see the languid  
flowers !

The fever that is in you burns them  
pale.

PRIYAM. { *(Looking at him joyfully and rising to salute him)*

ANAS. { Will not your Highness sit ?

KING.

Priyamvada,

I hope there's nothing that imperils life  
In your friend's sickness.

PRIYAM. (*Smiling*) It is medicined, sir,  
And runs a milder course.  
Is it not in the King's especial office  
To assuage his lieges' suffering ?

KING. Oh, it is  
Assuredly my office.

PRIYAM. Out of love  
For you, our friend is brought into  
this pass.  
Will you not pity and save her ?

KING. If it be so,  
Sweet maid, our hearts are mutually  
moved,  
And it is I who am honoured, I who  
am blest.

SAKUN. (*With a jealous smile*)  
Why do you tax the great King's  
courtesy ?  
Not in this simple grove, but where  
fair eyes

Await him in his palace, would he be.  
KING. O you that are so near my heart ! If  
you,

Whose eyes are like wine poured into  
my veins  
When they regard me—if you dream  
my heart  
Is aught but filled and brimmed with  
naught but you,  
Why, Love has slain me once, but  
you again  
With jealous doubts, and I am doubly  
slain.

ANAS. But we have heard, your Majesty,  
that kings  
Are prodigal to many of their love.  
Forget not then how easily our  
friend  
May bring her kindred sorrow and  
sharp tears.

KING. Tho' many a wife be in the palace  
courts,  
Henceforth there is no glory for my  
throne  
But these—the realm that shines from  
sea to sea

And this most lovely bride, outshining  
all.

ANAS. Your gracious word contents us.

PRIYAM. Anasuya,  
See, there's our little fawn distress-  
fully  
Seeking its mother. Let us help her  
find it.

SAKUN. Friends, my dear friends, leave me not  
all alone ;

Why must you both be gone ?

PRIYAM. Alone, afraid ?  
Now, when the world's protector's at  
your side ?

*(Exeunt)*

SAKUN. Are they gone ? Both, and left me ?

KING. Be not troubled,  
Lovely Sakuntala ! Have a heart of  
peace ;

He who adores you seeks your service  
only.

Here am I, that in place of those your  
friends



Will make a fan of the broad lotus-  
leaves,  
And with their waving woo the wind  
to kiss  
Delicious freshness on your brow,  
your bosom.

SAKUN.

Touch me not !

I will not bring about me the re-  
proaches  
Of them whom most I honour.

*(Rises and attempts to go)*

KING.

The still heat

Of heavy day is not yet past, and you,  
Sakuntala, have fever in your veins.

SAKUN. Hurt not our cherished customs, nor  
offend

The laws they lay on maidens, O  
great heir

Of mighty Puru. Though I love you,  
yet

I have no power nor authority  
To give myself.

KING.

So fearful of offence !  
Your kin shall not be wronged, and  
Father Kanwa  
Knows well the sacred law ; he will  
rejoice.

How often daughters of a royal saint  
Have wedded in that rite which knows  
no rite

But perfect dedication of pure hearts,  
And yet have found their father  
blessing them !

SAKUN.

Let me go, I beseech you ; let me take  
Counsel of friends.

KING.

Yes, I will let you.

SAKUN.

When ?

KING.

When, like the bee on the just-opened  
bud,

I have tasted that untasted sweet,  
your lips,

And for one heavenly moment have  
assuaged

The thirst that parches me, Sakun-  
tala !

VOICE. The loving birds, whom Fate compels  
To nightly separation now  
Must make the last of their farewells :  
The shadow lengthens from the bough.

SAKUN. (*Listening excitedly*)  
Hide yourself, Sire. Mother Gautami  
comes  
To seek me. (*The King withdraws*)

(*Enter GAUTAMI with a vase in her hand*)

GAUTAMI. (*Approaching SAKUNTALA*)  
My child, is the fretting fever in your  
body  
Allayed ?

SAKUN. Most honoured Mother, truly I think  
The burden of it passes.

GAUTAMI. Suffer me  
To sprinkle you with this pure hal-  
lowed water,  
And all the pains of sickness shall  
depart.

(*Sprinkling SAKUNTALA on the head*)

So ailing, and all alone here with the  
gods ?

SAKUN. 'Tis but a moment gone that Priyam-  
vada  
And Anasuya went down to the  
river.

GAUTAMI. Many be the days, child, of your  
happiness !  
The sun is setting ; come, let us go  
home.

*(Exit GAUTAMI)*

SAKUN. O my heart, you delayed when your  
desire  
Came of itself to you. O happy  
bower  
That took away my pain, farewell,  
farewell,  
Till such another hour. O come,  
come soon  
And bring me among these trees to  
Paradise !

*(Exit SAKUNTALA)*

KING. (*Advancing with a sigh*)

Alas, how many a hindrance lies  
between

Desire and its fulfilment. Whither now  
Must I betake me ? Let me a moment  
linger

Here where my love was, where all  
breathes of her.

Here in the flowery bed whereon she  
sat

Is the faint pressure of her shape, and  
here

The fading love-letter her finger-nail  
Wrote on the lotus-leaf. Her image  
stands,

Moves, rises, breathes before me. She  
is gone,

But the very air is sweet with her ;  
it wounds,

It stabs with divine sweetness. I  
must wrench

My heart out of this place, yet how to  
bear it ?

VOICE. The Vesper rites begin, but ghosts  
Swarm, like clouds of night and murk,  
Demon shapes ! In threatening hosts  
Round the altar flame they lurk.

KING. Fear not. I come to the rescue, I  
come. *(Exit)*

CURTAIN

SCENE IV

*The Garden of the Hermitage*

*(The two friends gathering flowers)*

ANAS. Priyamvada !

PRIYAM. Yes ?

ANAS. There's something troubles me.  
Sakuntala, by voluntary rite,  
Duly is wedded and has won a husband,  
Royal in rank and nature, worthy of  
her.  
And yet . . .

PRIYAM.

What is it ?

ANAS.

The sacrifice is over,  
The King is gone back to his Capital.  
But in his palace where bright ladies  
move  
Always around him with their courtly  
ways,  
Will he remember our Sakuntala,  
And this poor simple hermitage ?

PRIYAM.

Have no fear !  
Natures so noble are not changeable.  
It troubles me to know what Father  
Kanwa  
Shall say, when he is told.

ANAS.

He will approve  
Surely !

PRIYAM.

Now we have gathered flowers enough  
For the hallowed offering.

ANAS.

We must gather more,  
For we must offer flowers to the gods  
that watch  
Over Sakuntala married.

VOICE.

Ho there !

ANAS.

*(Listening)*

Hark !

That seems as if some guest announced  
himself.

PRIYAM.

Sakuntala, surely, must be in the  
cottage.

But O, to-day her heart is far from  
here.

ANAS.

Then we must go, we have gathered  
flowers enough.

*(They move away)*DURVASA. *(Entering)*

Woe to you ! Without welcome for  
a guest,

And such a guest ! Unhonoured, un-  
respected !

Woe ! Do you think to escape this  
negligence

And not to rue it ? Fond girl, fill  
your thoughts

Full of this lover who engrosses you,



So that you have no sense of the  
approach

Of one that is as rich in penances,  
As stored and treasured with sanctity,  
As you are poor in grace to under-  
stand ;

But you shall rue it ! Hear my curse,  
and fear !

He that now occupies your inmost  
heart

Shall utterly forget you. You shall be  
Razed from his memory, as a drunken  
man's

When morning comes ; a dream ; less  
than a dream,

A story told and stared at. You  
shall strive

To pierce him with remembrance,  
and in vain.

He shall disown you, girl, and you be  
lost

To him, as a sail sinking down the  
sea.

My curse is spoken. It shall come to pass.

(DURVASA *passes out*)

(*The girls re-enter*)

PRIYAM. I am afraid ; I fear some terrible thing  
Threatens us. In her mere forgetfulness,  
Because her heart was far from where  
she is,  
Sakuntala has angered a great Saint,  
Ah yes, no less a sage than the great  
Durvasa,  
Whose anger is so easily provoked.  
It is he who has just cursed her. See,  
he goes,  
Shaken with passion, as if none could  
turn him  
From his red wrath that's like an  
eating fire.

ANAS. See how he strides off. After him,  
run quick.

Throw yourself at his feet ; beseech  
him back

While I prepare an offering for him.

*(Exit PRIYAMVADA. ANASUYA drops basket  
of flowers)*

Ah,

That comes of haste. Ill-luck !

*(Starts to gather them up)*

PRIYAM. *(Re-entering)* I have done my best,  
But who that lives could soothe or  
satisfy  
Such ill-grained, stiff-necked, proud  
and churlish stuff ?  
'Tis something to have stroked him  
down a little.

ANAS. Even a little, that is much for him.

PRIYAM. He stood refusing to turn back again.  
I supplicated pardon. " O great Sage,  
Pardon," I said, " this innocent of-  
fence  
Of a young girl, an uninstructed girl,

Ignorant what respect your sainted  
head

And antique lineage claimed as was  
most due.

Remember her devotion and forgive ! ”

ANAS. And then ? And then ?

PRIYAM. “ It must be, what I spoke  
Must come to pass.” So he said.

“ But the ring,  
At the sight of that, the ring of recog-  
nition,  
The spell shall break.”

ANAS. Then we may breathe again,  
For when the good King went away,  
he set  
His signet ring upon Sakuntala’s  
finger,  
In token of remembrance. That will  
save her.

PRIYAM. Look, Anasuya, there sits our dear  
friend,  
Still as a statue, propping her small  
chin

On her left hand. So deep in thought  
is she,  
So drowned in memories of her lord  
and love,  
That she is unaware even of herself :  
How much more of a stranger passing  
by !

ANAS. Priyamvada, let this be between us  
two  
And known to no one other. Her  
heart's young,  
Tender and delicate, and to bear too  
much  
Would break it. She shall not be  
troubled. Who,  
Sprinkling a tender jasmine flower,  
would scald it ?

CURTAIN

## ACT II

### SCENE I

#### *The Hermitage*

*(Time : Early Dawn)*

ANAS. *(Entering hurriedly. To herself)*  
I should be about and busy, but my  
    hands  
Refuse their work, though I awoke so  
    early,  
And hardly is dawn breaking, even  
    now.  
Ignorant though I am of the world's  
    ways,  
I cannot think but that Sakuntala  
Is shamefully entreated. Love has  
    won ;

Love, Love alone, persuaded that  
sweet soul

In the innocence of her heart to  
entrust her faith

To one so false and fickle.—Is it the  
curse ?

Durvasa's curse ? How else could  
such a king,

Esteemed so virtuous, after rites so  
solemn,

Suffer this long time to run silent by  
With never word or message ? What's  
to do ?

I cannot think ; unless it be to send  
The ring, his token. Yet by whom to  
send it ?

The austere hermits ? Such a thing  
to them

Would be a despised toy ; *they* never  
suffered !

And I, how shall I stiffen up my  
courage

To tell our father that Sakuntala

Is married, and nears her time to be a  
mother.

What shall I do ?

*(Enter PRIYAMVADA)*

PRIYAM. Quick, Anasuya, quick !  
Sakuntala departs for her new home,  
Her husband's palace. Come, help us  
to make  
Her joyful preparation.

ANAS. What do you mean ?

PRIYAM. Listen. I went but now to Sakuntala  
To ask her how she slept. . . .

ANAS. And then ?

PRIYAM. I found her  
With her head bowed in the arms of  
Father Kanwa,  
Who stroked her head, comforting her,  
and saying,  
“ My child, I wish you joy, I give you  
joy !  
We are blest with happy omens. In  
the fire



The offering fell down straight, and  
the smoke rose  
Auspiciously toward him that sacrificed.  
This very day I send you, and I give  
you  
Escort of hermits for your company  
To take you to your husband." So  
he spoke.

ANAS. But who told Father Kanwa ?

PRIYAM. A voice from Heaven,  
As he was entering the sanctuary.

ANAS. A voice ? What did it say ?

PRIYAM. You shall hear. Listen.

" Into thy daughter has the glory  
flown  
Of King Dushyanta, as that  
famous tree  
Grew fiery from the goddess ;  
gods alone  
Shall vie in glory with the child  
to be."

ANAS. Oh happy news ! It glows into my  
heart—

And yet, we are to lose Sakuntala ;  
And joy is half a sorrow.

PRIYAM. We must hide  
Sorrow as best we may. Let her be  
glad.

ANAS. We must prepare the apparel of the  
bride.

My heart had this day ever in mind ;  
against it

On yonder tree I hung a chaplet made  
Of Keshari flowers. *(Takes it down)*

VOICE OF Gautami, Gautami,

KANWA. Bid Sarngarava and the other men  
Make ready to escort Sakuntala.

PRIYAM. Haste, Anasuya, see, they call the  
hermits

Who take Sakuntala to Hastinapur.

*(Enter GAUTAMI followed by SAKUNTALA)*

ANAS. Sakuntala comes,—according to the  
rite,  
Fresh-bathed.

GAUT. My child, may you become the joy  
of the new house you go to !

SAKUN. Sainted mother,  
I take the blessing that you give me.

ANAS. Dear,  
May we not dress you for your  
journey, and bless  
The raiment that you go in ?

SAKUN. O dear friends,  
Welcome, welcome. . . . Perhaps  
I never shall be dressed by you again.

ANAS. Weep not, beloved. It is no hour for  
tears.

Alas !

These simple flowers and the rude  
ornaments

Our hermitage abounds in, poorly set  
The jewel of your beauty.

*(Two hermits, HARITA and NARADA enter  
with costly presents)*

HARITA. Ornaments  
Are here, befitting for a queen to wear.

GAUT. My son, whence came these things ?

HARITA. From Father Kanwa's  
Magical art of power.

GAUT. His mind's creation ?

HARITA. Not wholly. Listen. Father Kanwa  
bade us

Gather the blossoms for Sakuntala.

Lo, there was hanging from a certain  
tree

A robe of finest linen, as if those

Who wove it had assured the wearer  
bliss ;—

Never was moon so white. Another  
stem

Oozed from its bark droppings of rosy  
juice

For the staining of her feet ; and  
from another

Wood-nymphs were stretching out  
their little hands,

Far as the wrist, slender as shoots of  
spring,

To offer her bright ornaments, all gold.

GAUT. The nymphs of the wood do honour  
you indeed.

So fair a favour auguries the bliss  
A queen has in her husband's royal  
house.

NARADA. Harita, come! for Father Kanwa  
now

Has ended his ablution. Let us go  
And tell him of this homage of the  
grove.

ANAS. Alas, we are strange to adornments  
such as these.

PRIYAM. We can paint pictures; here is form  
and colour.

Instinct will guide us.

SAKUN. Yes, I know your skill.

*(Enter KANWA followed by HARITA and NARADA)*

KANWA. This very day Sakuntala departs.  
At thought of it my heart is pierced  
with loss,  
My voice breaks with suppression of  
its tears,

My very sight is numbed with trouble.

If I,

Even I, a hermit, schooled in the  
austere way,

Can suffer this thro' love, O, how  
much more

Must pangs of separation bitter be  
To those that dwell in the kind  
household life !

GAUT. Child, here your father comes, in  
tears, with joy  
Ready to fold you in his arms. Revere  
him.

SAKUN. My father, all my duty and reverence  
to you.

KANWA. Be like Yayati's Sharmista. For she  
Won favour and honour equal to her  
worth.

And may the son you bear as kingly be  
As Puru, and reign over all the earth.

GAUT. Venerable Father, she accepts your  
blessing,  
As if already all it invokes were hers.

KANWA. Hither, Sakuntala, come hither ; pace  
With pure feet round the sacrificial  
fire.

Now let the fire upon the altar  
From the sacred hearth that's taken  
And fed with logs of hallowed wood  
And with grass all round it shaken,  
Let the fire assoiling  
With its holy glow  
Of burnt offerings' piercing odour  
Purify thee now !

*(He looks round)*

Where are Sarngarava and Saradvata ?

SARN. We are here, Father.

KANWA. Lead the way for your sister.  
Hearken, you neighbour trees of the  
holy grove.  
She who would never seek to quench  
her thirst  
Before she had refreshed your thirsty  
roots,

Who, tho' she loved adornments, never  
plucked  
One flower of yours, because of love  
for you,  
Whose time of joy was your young  
burst of bloom,  
She, even she, Sakuntala, departs.  
With kindness, all of you, and tender  
breathings  
Out of your branches comfort her  
farewell.

*(A Kokil sings)*

SARN. Father, the trees are answering your  
prayer  
In bird notes, cooing comfort and  
sweet boon,  
Singing their farewell to Sakuntala,  
Their sister, nurtured in their own  
green grove.

*(Invisible being sings)*

May many a pool about her path  
refresh her wandering eye



Vivid with lazy lotus-leaves ; may  
happy trees on high  
Temper the noon, and sultry light a  
breezy shadow sift,  
The dust beneath her feet be soft as  
lotus-pollen drift ;  
Her path be cheered with favouring  
airs and resting-places find  
At evening laid in pleasantness and  
altogether kind.

*(All stand listening in wonder)*

GAUT. My daughter, hark, nymphs of the  
grove that love you  
As their own kind, sing blessings on  
your journey.  
Make your obeisance to these holy  
nymphs.

*(SAKUNTALA makes obeisance)*

SAKUN. Priyamvada, my heart aches.—It has  
such longing  
To see the face of my dear lord again.

And yet my feet are heavy, they will  
not move.

It is hard, hard to leave our hermi-  
tage.

PRIYAM. The bitterness of parting is not  
hard

To your dear bosom only. As the  
hour draws

To the last moment, all—to the very  
trees

Of the kind grove—are sharing in  
those pangs.

The deer let fall the grass they browsed  
upon ;

The dancing peacock stops ;

The creepers cast their sad leaves one  
by one

Trembling as pale tear-drops.

SAKUN. My father, suffer me before I go

Bid farewell to the jasmine, my be-  
loved,

My sister—O you Moonlight of the  
Grove,

Though you be bride to the tall Mango  
tree,

Embrace me, let me feel your twining  
arms.

From this day forth I must live far  
from you.

Care for her, Father, as you cared for  
me.

Dear friends, I give her into your  
charge too.

PRIYAM. (*Weeping*) And into whose charge do  
you give your friends ?

And who will care for us when you are  
gone ?

KANWA. For shame. Nay, dry those tears.  
Is it with tears

You'd comfort your companion, when  
she most

Needs consolation and the help of  
cheer.

SAKUN. Oh, who is it keeps pulling at my  
dress,

As if to hinder me ?

KANWA.

Beloved daughter,  
It is the fawn, your own adopted  
child.

Tenderly did you rear it, gave it rice  
In dainty handfuls ; when its mouth  
was pricked

By the sharp-bladed grass, you healed  
the sore

With ointment from the juice of  
Ingudi.

And now this same fawn seeks to  
follow you.

SAKUN. Poor little fawn, poor fawn ! Left  
motherless

So soon after your birth ; and it was I  
Who filled your mother's place. I  
mothered you

And reared you with my own hand.

Now that mother,

That second mother, leaves you, and  
who will care

For my poor fawn ? Oh, Father,  
mother her.

KANWA. Weep not, my daughter ; tears that  
swell and prick  
Under the eyelid, let them not flow  
forth

To weaken resolution ; but be firm,  
True to yourself and me. The path  
begins

Before you, and leads upward, down-  
ward, on

Over the rough and smooth, the same  
for all.

SARN. Reverend Father, the hour comes to  
depart.

Instruct us, if you will, what we must  
do

In the King's palace, at our journey's  
end.

KANWA. When you present Sakuntala to the  
King,

Sarngarava, give him from me this  
message :

“ Remember, King, both your exalted  
race

And our devoted life. This maiden's  
love

None prompted her to give ; she gave  
herself

Out of the fulness of her own young  
heart.

Honour her, then, as equal, in all  
dues

Of custom and observance. More  
than this

Is destiny's appointing, nor befits  
The kindred of a bride to ask for  
more."

SARN. An honourable and fit message,  
Father.

KANWA. And now to you a word, my child.  
We hermits,

Although we dwell sequestered from  
the world,

Are not all ignorant of the world's  
ways.

GAUT. The truly wise have wisdom in all  
things.

KANWA. Give honour to your elders ; never  
jealous ;  
But to your rivals be as a dear friend.  
Even tho' your husband wrong you  
with harsh usage,  
Let not the anger in you act the rebel.  
Have ever courtesy for those that  
serve you,  
Not arrogant in prosperity ; for so  
Do young wives grow to matron's  
dignity,  
A blessing on their home, and not a  
bane.  
But what says Gautami ?

GAUT. Woman could not better  
Such counsel. Daughter, take it well  
to mind.

KANWA. One last embrace, child. Then we all  
must part.

SAKUN. Oh, Father, must then even Priyam-  
vada  
And Anasuya leave me, here, and  
now ?

KANWA. Daughter, they also one day must be  
given

In marriage. Therefore they go not  
to court.

Gautami will go with you.

SAKUN. (*Throwing her arms round KANWA*)

My dear Father,

I cannot bear the parting. I am torn,  
Torn like a tendril of the sandal tree  
That some one breaks in its own home,  
breaks off

And carries with him from the western  
hills.

It breaks me to be torn so from your  
breast.

How can I bear life on a foreign soil ?

KANWA. The blessing of my old age on you,  
child,

My child. May all my prayers for  
you come true.

SAKUN. Put your arms round me, both of  
you, dear friends,

Dear, dear companions.



ANAS.

Dear Sakuntala,  
Remember, if the King—it might so  
chance—

Be slow at first in recognising you,  
You have but to show this ring,  
marked with his name.

SAKUN. The very thought of doubt makes my  
heart beat.

PRIYAM. There's no real cause for fearing.

SARN. Come, lady,

We must haste onward. The sun's  
rising high.

SAKUN. When shall I see this happy grove  
again ?

KANWA. You shall return. When for long  
years you have been  
Fellowed in majesty with that rich  
realm

Whose boundaries are the boundaries  
of the Earth,

The rising and the setting of the sun ;  
When you have found your peerless  
son a bride,

And he takes on the realm's care in  
his turn,

Then shall you come, you and your  
lord together,

And both re-enter this old place of  
peace.

GAUT. The favourable time for travel passes,  
We must be gone, child. Venerable  
Father,

Lead home the others now, go your-  
self first,

Or these last words will never end.

KANWA. My daughter,  
Keep me no longer.

SAKUN. Oh, most loving of Fathers,  
Too much of austere penance has  
unthewed

Your strength ; but suffer not your-  
self to grieve

Too much because of me. Be com-  
forted.

KANWA. I shall see growing from the grains of  
rice

Dropt from your hands, when you  
made offering of it,  
The green shoots. When I see them  
springing up  
How shall my grief ever be comforted ?

SAKUN. Farewell, Father ; Farewell, sisters.

*(Exit)*

PRIYAM. Oh, she is gone, gone, and the trees  
have hidden

Our darling from our sight.

KANWA. Control your tears.

Let us go home.

ANAS. The grove is all a desert  
Without Sakuntala. How can we *go*  
*home* ?

KANWA. It is meet and natural that it should  
seem so,

Because of the affection in your hearts.  
But come. Now that Sakuntala is  
gone,

A kind of calm begins to steal on me  
And solaces the sad thoughts of my  
mind.

Verily a girl is nothing of one's own.  
Now that I have delivered up this  
child  
To her lord's keeping, I am reconciled ;  
It is as if I had restored a loan.

CURTAIN

SCENE II

*The Palace Garden*

SONG.

*(Off stage)*

Bee, O Bee, that eagerly  
Roamest after honey new,  
Thee the mango blossom drew,  
Thee it held with honey-kiss—  
Now it is the lotus holds thee  
Lost in bliss.  
Is the mango all forgot  
For that new flower that enfolds thee,  
Quite forgot ?

KING.

*(Aside)*

Strange ! but that song moves me, I  
know not how ;

A melancholy steals into my soul  
As if it sought something it could not  
find,

Some long forgotten shadow dear to it.  
When in some idle careless hour the  
heart

Feels on a sudden a longing like sweet  
pain

Because of beauty seen in face or  
flower,

Or, in a voice, music that breathes  
and falls,

Doubtless it is the shadow of some-  
thing dear

Loved in a former and forgotten  
birth,

But so deep rooted in the heart, that  
tho'

It knows not, it remembers what it  
loved.

CHAMBERLAIN. (*Approaching*)

Hail to the King and victory ! Here  
are hermits  
Come from Himalya valleys where  
they dwell,  
And bringing with them women. And  
they bear  
A message also for the King, from  
Kanwa,  
The ancient sage that is their chief.

KING. Hermits !  
And women in their company ?

CHAMB. Even so,  
Majesty.

KING. Bid my household priest receive  
The hermits with due honour. After-  
ward  
They may attend me here.

CHAMB. It shall be done. (*Exit*)

KING. (*Walking on, with the air of one oppressed with  
the cares of Government*)  
When they have compassed their  
desires, all men

Are happy and content; but not a king.

For him to attain, breeds but another care.

Attainment eases but the racked desire.

For that which is attained must still be guarded

With ever - anxious thought. This royal state

Is like a king's sun-shading canopy,  
Heavy in the hand that holds it;  
tho' its office

Is to refresh the weary and to shield  
From the weight of the noon, what  
is it but a weight

And weariness to him that bears it up ?

*(HERALD sings KING's praise)*

*(Enter CHAPLAIN with HERMITS)*

CHAP. There stands the King, most honoured  
sir, the world's

Protector ; from the judgment seat  
he comes,

And now awaits you.

SARN.

The King, it may be, noble of nature,  
swerves

No whit from the right path ; it may  
be none,

Not even the lowest here, is willed to  
evil ;

And yet this palace with its idle  
throngs

That come and go, loiter and pass  
and smile,

To me is like a house devoured by fire.

SARAD.

It is natural in a palace to feel so.

I look upon this folk, lost in their  
pleasures,

As a man, clean from his ablution,  
looks

On one that's smeared with dirt ; as  
one that's free

Looks on a manacled and fettered  
slave.



HERMITS. Hail to the King and victory !

KING. Greeting to you !

SARN. May all your vows be compassed and  
fulfilled !

KING. I trust no molestation has disturbed  
Your hermitage's holy observances.

SARAD. Who could molest the rites of pious  
men

Where the King rules ? Can dark-  
ness enter day ?

KING. I hope the venerable Kanwa keeps  
Good health in his old age.

SARN. For holy men  
Health and prosperity are things of  
course,

For they have power upon them.  
Father Kanwa

Bade greet your majesty and give  
this message.

KING. I listen to his commands.

SARN. He bade us say  
That he rejoices to confirm and bless

The marriage which the King lately  
contracted

With Sakuntala his daughter. There-  
fore since

She is in hope soon to bear you a  
child,

Receive Sakuntala into your palace  
That both, as due prescription has  
ordained

For such occasion, may perform to-  
gether

The holy ceremonies binding you.

(GAUTAMI enters with SAKUNTALA)

KING. What strange requirement's this you  
make of me ?

SAKUN. His words go to my heart like flames  
of fire.

SARN. What do I hear ? Do you then  
hesitate  
To take her to your wife ?

- KING. Can it be true  
That you assert that I wedded this  
lady ?
- SAKUN. You feared this, O my heart, and it  
comes true.
- SARN. Does it become a King to be unjust  
Because his heart repents what he has  
done ?
- KING. What means this accusation ?
- SARN. It is well  
The world sees seldom such incon-  
stancy  
Except in such as power intoxicates.
- KING. Is it I that word is aimed at ?
- GAUT. Be not abashed,  
My daughter ; let me but undo your  
veil.  
Your husband then will know you.
- KING. Who is this fair one, whose veiled  
beauty shines  
As from a cloud, half-hidden ? I  
misdoubt me

Whether or no this bright unblemished  
shape

Who shows among these hermits that  
attend her

Like a fresh bloom among dried yellow  
leaves

Was once, in some far season, wed to  
me.

My heart goes hovering, like the bee  
at dawn

Over the jasmine-blossom that's dew-  
drenched,

And I can neither yield me to my  
joy

Nor, stronger than my heart, relin-  
quish it.

SARN.

Great King, what will you say now ?

KING.

Holy men,

The more this matter's pondered in  
my mind

The less does memory discover aught  
Of this strange thing you affirm so  
vehemently,

That I ever was wedded to this  
lady.

What can I answer, being so well  
assured

That I am not her husband ?

SAKUN.

Oh, my heart !

He denies even that we were ever  
wedded.

Ah, now I know how high my hope  
had climbed,

Now when it's fallen like a vine  
unpropt,

And there is nothing left ; all my  
dreams darkened,

And the sweet vision of happiness  
that I had,

Counting the days to it, gone, gone  
for ever !

SARN.

What ? Is the Sage to be insulted, he  
So generous, who when you had  
secretly

Wedded his daughter, gave his good  
consent,

And by permitting him who stole to  
keep,

Forgave and justified the ravisher ?

SARAD. Samgarava, use no more words to him.  
Our part is done, Sakuntala. What  
we had

To say is spoken ; what the King has  
answered

You have heard. Now it is for you to  
speak.

And give him proof, past doubting, of  
your marriage.

SAKUN. My revered husband—no, I dare not  
use

That name, since you deny me. Royal  
son

Of Puru's blood, it is not worthy you  
To deal so with an innocent girl.

How brief

A time it is since in the hermitage  
You made affiance solemnly with vows  
And plighted faith to her whom now,  
cruel !

You without cause disown.

KING.

I'll hear no more.

Why do you seek to shame me, shame  
the race

Of kings that I am sprung from, and  
drag down

Me with you, as a river drags its  
banks

Down into the clear water, clouding it  
With mud and wreckage and the  
uprooted tree ?

SAKUN.

If it be so, then, if it be the truth  
That you believe me to be another's  
wife,

And some cloud lies dark on your  
memory,

I have that with me that shall melt  
the cloud

And put the false suspicion from your  
heart.

This token. (*Feeling for the ring*) Ah !  
the ring ! I have lost the ring !  
It is not on my finger !

GAUT. When you knelt  
In reverence at Sachi's holy pool  
It must have slipt and fallen.

KING. Now indeed  
The old saying is come true :  
Womankind and ready mind.

SAKUN. Say rather  
Destiny has dominion over all.  
I will bring one thing further to your  
mind  
Which may persuade you yet !

KING. Well, let me hear.

SAKUN. Do you not remember in the jasmine-  
bower,  
One day how you had poured the  
rain-water  
That a lotus had collected in its cup  
Into the hollow of your hand.

KING. Tell on,  
I am listening.

SAKUN. Just then my adopted child,  
The little fawn, ran up with long soft  
eyes,



And you, before you quenched your  
own thirst, gave  
To the little creature, saying, " Drink  
you first,  
Gentle fawn ! " But she would not  
from strange hands.  
And yet, immediately after, when  
I took some water in my hand, she  
drank,  
Absolute in her trust. Then with a  
smile  
You said, " Each creature has faith in  
its own kind.  
You are children both of the same  
wild wood, and each  
Confides in the other, knowing where  
its trust is."

KING. Sweet, fair—and false ! Such women  
entice fools.

GAUT. Speak not such words, illustrious  
prince. For she,  
Reared in a hermitage, knows not  
deceit.

KING. The female gift of cunning may be  
marked

In creatures of all kinds ; in woman  
most.

The cuckoo leaves her eggs for dupes  
to hatch,

Then flies away secure and triumphing.

SAKUN. Ignoble ! By your own corrupted  
heart

You read the hearts of others.  
Treacherous

Beyond all tales of treachery, you  
robe

Yourself in righteousness, but you are  
false

As a well hidden with flowers, a deep  
dark well

The unhappy stumble in, a pit of  
darkness.

KING. Good lady, Dushyanta's deeds are  
known

To all—open as day. But not this  
marriage.

SAKUN. Well did my fond heart earn this  
bitterness,  
Since in the innocence of my heart I  
gave  
My honour to a man whose mouth  
drops honey,  
Whose heart is filled with poison.

SARN. Thus do those  
That never checked their licence hurt,  
unheeding.  
O with what sure knot should the  
marriage bonds  
Be tied, and bonds of secret marriage  
most!  
When the one heart knows not the  
other well,  
Love's heaven changes often to hate's  
hell.

KING. Why do you trust this girl's tale and  
accuse me  
Of an imagined crime ?

SARN.

True, that were foolish !  
How monstrous, out of reason, to  
believe  
A girl without art and unused to  
guile !  
Put your trust rather in the schooled  
and smooth  
Dissembler, for whom simpleness is  
folly.

KING.

Brahmin, suppose this tale true.  
Where's the gain  
In such betrayal of a girl ?

SARN.

Ruin !

KING.

A Prince of Puru's race, to seek his  
own  
Or other's ruin ? Who'd invent such  
madness ?

SARAD.

Sarnagarava, this is but waste of  
words.

We have done all that was enjoined on  
us.

Let us return. Take or reject her,  
Sire,

As you will, she is your wife. Gautami,  
Lead the way ; come !

SAKUN. Will you desert me so  
In this my anguish ?

GAUT. Son Sarngarava,  
Sakuntala beseeches us with tears  
Not to abandon her. Poor child,  
alas !

What will she do here with a lord so  
cruel ?

SARN. (*Angrily*)  
What, wilful wayward woman, do you  
seek

To be independent of your lord and  
king ?

If you be such as the king calls you,  
how

Can Kanwa take you for his child  
again ?

But you are pure in heart, innocent  
in act,

And, being thus, can in your hus-  
band's house

Be patient and bear all things, even  
bondage.

Remain ! We must return.

KING.                       Why thus delude her,  
Hermit ?

SARN. Suppose that heart-distracting pleasures,

O King, have drowned memory of  
former deeds,

Should you, who fear to fail in virtue,  
now

Desert your wife ?

KING. Which is the heavier sin ?  
 Either I am mad, or she false. Must  
 I wed

One that's another's, or forsake my  
own ?

CHAP. Now if . . .

KING. What would you say, my soul's instructor?

CHAP.    Let it be thus.    The lady shall remain  
          Within my house until her child is  
                          born.

KING. Why this ?

CHAP. The astrologers, have not they  
told you

That your first child shall be an  
emperor ?

If it should be, this hermit's daughter's  
son

Bears the imperial birthmarks, then  
receive her

Into the palace as your queen. If  
not,

She goes back to her father.

KING. Be it so.

I bow to wisdom.

CHAP. Daughter, follow me.

SAKUN. O divine earth, open and take me in.

(CHAPLAIN goes out with SAKUNTALA.

KING remains brooding. CHAPLAIN  
returns)

CHAP. A miracle ! A miracle !

KING. What has happened ?

CHAP. Great prince, we have beheld a prodigy  
Beyond conception.

KING. What is it you have seen ?

CHAP. Kanwa's disciples were scarce gone,  
when lo,

Sakuntala, her arms stretched out,  
all tears,

Cried out upon her lamentable lot.

KING. And then ?

CHAP. Before our eyes, out of the air  
A light came, and a heavenly form  
shone toward us

Apparelled in the light—a woman's  
form.

Sakuntala was taken in her arms,  
And both upon the instant disap-  
peared.

KING. So, my good priest, there is the end  
to it.

Never can man's conjecture disen-  
twine

The riddle of this mystery. Come,  
since nothing



Helps, let us unperplex our minds and  
seek  
To rest and to forget.

*(Exeunt)*

CURTAIN

## ACT III

### SCENE I

#### *A Street*

*(Enter the King's brother-in-law as Superintendent of the City Police; and with him two Constables dragging in a poor Fisherman, who has his hands tied behind his back)*

1ST POLICE. *(Cuffing the Fisherman)* Now, thief, tell us where you found this ring. The King's own signet-ring! See, here is the name engraved on the setting of the splendid jewel.

FISHER. *(With a gesture of fear)* Mercy, your Honour. I did not steal the ring; indeed, I did not.

1ST           No doubt the King took you for  
POLICE. a famous Brahmin, and made you a  
          present of it !

FISHER.     Hear me, Sirs. I am a poor fisher-  
          man, and I live on the banks of the  
          Ganges, close by Sachi's sacred pool.

POLICE.     You rogue, who asked you where  
          you lived or who your ancestors  
          were ?

SUP.        Let him tell his story forthright,  
          Suchaka. Don't interrupt him.

BOTH.       As you please, Sir. Go on, then,  
          fellow, and say what you have to say.

FISHER.     I am but a poor man, who supports  
          his family by catching fish with nets,  
          hooks, and such things.

SUP.        (*Laughing*) Truly a noble occupation !

FISHER.     Don't speak like that, master. A  
          man can't give up the trade he was  
          born to (as the saying is) even though  
          it has a bad name. Even a butcher  
          might have a tender heart.

SUP. Well, go on with your story.

FISHER. One day I was cutting open a big carp, and in its maw, all sparkling with the jewel, was that ring. Then, just when I was trying to sell it, your honours took me up. That is how I came by the ring. I tell you the simple truth. Now kill me or let me go.

SUP. (*Smelling the ring*) It's a queer story, Januka, but there is no doubt of the fellow's trade; he smells so fishy; and so does the ring. We must go further into this matter. We must take it to the King.

2ND POLICE. Very good, Sir. (*To the FISHERMAN*) Rascal, move on.

SUP. Now, Suchaka; take good care your prisoner does not escape, while I go and lay the whole story of the finding of this ring before the King himself. I will soon return.

2ND           Go, Sir, by all means; and may  
POLICE.   the King be gracious to you.

*(Exit SUPERINTENDENT)*

1ST           Suchaka, the Chief is a long time  
POLICE.   about his business.

2ND           Aye, kings are not to be seen at any  
POLICE.   hour of the day.

1ST           My fingers itch to strike the first  
POLICE.   blow at this royal victim here. We  
             must kill him with all due honours.  
             I long to begin binding the flowers  
             round his head.

*(Pretends to strike a blow at the FISHERMAN)*

FISHER.    Your honour will surely not put an  
             innocent man to a cruel death.

2ND           There's our Chief coming at last.  
POLICE.    See! He has a paper in his hand.  
             We shall soon know what the King  
             has ordered; so prepare, my fine  
             fellow, either to become food for the  
             vultures, or to make the acquaintance  
             of some hungry jackal,

SUP. *(Entering)* Suchaka ! Set the fisherman free. His story about the ring is all true.

1ST POLICE. As you please, Sir. There's a dead man revived for you. *(He releases the FISHERMAN)*

FISHER. *(Bowing low to the SUPERINTENDENT)*  
What think you of my trade now, Master ?

SUP. Here is a purse, my good man ; the King desired me to present it to you. It contains the full value of the ring.

*(Gives him the money)*

FISHER. *(Taking it and bowing)* His Majesty does me too great honour.

1ST POLICE. Indeed he does. It's as if he had snatched you from the gallows to seat you on his royal elephant.

2ND POLICE. Master, the King must set great value on that ring, or he would not have sent such a present to a fellow like this.

SUP. I don't think he prizes it for its costly jewel so much as because it reminds him of some one he loves. The moment it was shown to him, for all his habit of control, he could not contain his emotion.

1ST  
POLICE. Then you have done him a great service.

2ND  
POLICE. All to benefit this husband of a fish-wife.

*(Looks enviously at the FISHERMAN)*

FISHER. Here's half the money for you, gentlemen. It will serve to buy the flowers you spoke of.

SUP. My good fisherman, you are an excellent fellow, and I have quite a liking for you. Let us seal our new friendship over a glass of good wine. Let's to the next wineshop.

ALL. With all my heart.

CURTAIN

## SCENE II

*In the Palace Garden**(Enter Ladies singing and dancing.**Enter CHAMBERLAIN)*

CHAMB. Stop, foolish girls. Know you not  
that the King  
Ordains there shall be no Spring  
Festival?

MAID. Forbids it? Pardon us, Sir, we did  
not know.  
We have been away upon the King's  
service  
Tending his pleasure-gardens.

CHAMB. I accept  
The excuse. But see that you avoid  
the fault.

MAID. Noble Sir, may we be allowed to  
know



Why the Spring celebration is forbidden ?

CHAMB. Have you lived out of gossip, and not heard  
Of how the King disowned Sakuntala ?

MAID. Oh yes, we have heard the story, just so far  
As the discovery of the ring.

CHAMB. There's little  
Left then to tell you. As soon as  
the King saw  
The ring, his memory returned. He  
cried  
“ It is all true, and I remember all  
My marriage with Sakuntala.” From  
that hour  
He is given up to anguishing remorse.  
All that was once his pleasure he  
abhors.  
Courtier and counsellor wait no more  
on him ;

He has no use for such ; by night he  
tosses

On the bed's edge, never an eyelid  
closed ;

And in the day-time, when to the  
palace-women

From habit's courtesy he speaks a  
word

He stumbles at their names.—*Sakun-  
tala !*

That one name only slips out of his  
heart,

And he stands tongue-betrayed, and  
frowns and flushes.

So is it, the Spring Festival's for-  
bidden.

CHAMB. He comes, a king in sorrow ; noble  
nature

Wrought and in pain keeps its own  
beauty still.

Now to your duties, maidens.

(*ALL exeunt*)

*(Enter KING DUSHYANTA, dressed in deep mourning, attended by MATHAVYA and VETRAVATI)*

KING. *(Walks slowly about, deep in thought)*  
My Love, my fawn-eyed Love, would  
have awaked  
This heart of mine from its accursed  
sleep  
And could not. Now it is awake,  
and now  
Open-eyed stares upon its own re-  
morse.

MATH. Another fit of the Sakuntala fever !  
How shall we ever cure him ?

KING. Vetravati,  
Go to my minister, Pishuna ; tell  
him  
I am too weary to sit on the judgment-  
seat.  
He is to do my office, and report.

*(Exit VETRAVATI)*

MATH. Wearisome people. We've got rid of  
them ;

Now rest yourself among the garden  
trees.

It is delicious with the Spring's first  
kiss.

KING. Ah, friend, when sorrow has a mind  
to enter

She finds somewhere a crevice. That  
old saying's

Written on me.

No sooner has my spirit been delivered  
From that dark vapour of forgetful-  
ness

Which lost me my Sakuntala, than see,  
An arrow of the love-god, O my friend,  
Aims at my heart out of the mango-  
flower.

MATH.

Wait, my friend,

I will destroy Love's arrow with my  
stick.

KING.

I know a Brahmin's mighty power.  
But now

My dear friend, what place shall I  
find where I

Can sit and gaze upon the blossomed  
vines

That put me in remembrance of my  
love ?

MATH. Vetravati was commanded to bring  
here

The sketch you painted of Sakuntala.  
Sit on this seat.

KING. Well do I now remember  
What passed between me and Sakun-  
tala.

And I confided all to you, my friend !  
Why did you never breathe her name  
to me ?

Was your remembrance clouded like  
my own ?

MATH. No, I had not forgotten. But you  
told me

It was a pastime merely and feigned  
passion.

And I was so dull-witted, I believed.  
So Fate decreed, and there's no help  
for it.

KING. O my friend, find me, find me some  
way out.

MATH. Come, come. Why so abandon all to  
grief ?

Such weakness is not worthy. A  
wise man

Suffers not sorrow so to master  
him.

Tho' the storms rage, stands not the  
mountain fast ?

KING. When I recall Sakuntala's anguished  
eyes,

A bride forsaken, how can I choose  
but let

Grief have its way ?

MATH. A thought, a sudden thought !  
Perhaps some goddess or some  
heavenly nymph

Has carried her from earth.

KING. Well may that be !  
Who else would dare lay finger upon  
my bride ?

I have been told that the nymph  
Menaka  
Is her celestial mother. And I too  
Sometimes have guessed that some  
of her companions  
Ravished her to their own abode in  
heaven.

MATH. If that's so, you will surely meet ere  
long.

KING. How ?

MATH. Can a mother endure to see her  
daughter  
Suffer such anguish, severed from her  
husband ?  
And then the ring ! Is not that  
augury  
That what's lost may, beyond all hope,  
be found ?

KING. Pity the ring. It is fallen from a  
heaven  
Hard to earn. When I left the hal-  
lowed grove,

My beloved wife said, "Oh, how  
many days

Before my lord receives me as his  
queen?"

I put the ring upon her finger, and  
said,

"Count on the ring each letter of my  
name,

Day by day, till the syllables are  
spelt

And all the name completed. On  
that day

There shall a messenger appear to you  
And guide you to my hidden dwelling-  
place."

Then through my madness cruelly  
all fell out.

MATH. How came the ring into the maw of a  
carp

As if it were a fish-hook?

KING. It slipped doubtless  
From my Sakuntala's hand, slipped  
off and fell



Into the stream of Ganges, while she  
knelt

Doing reverence at Sachi's holy  
pool.

Well, I can only chide the ring.

MATH.

And I

Can only chide my stick. Why are  
you crooked

When I am straight ?

*(Enter VETRAVATI with a tablet)*

VETRA. My royal Lord, here is the Queen's  
portrait.

KING. The drawing is brimmed over with  
sweet meaning.

MATH. I see you are a painter deft of hand.

KING. My love came ; I repudiated her,  
When she was pleading to my eyes,  
all warm

And living. Now I feast upon her  
picture,

My one sole prized possession in the  
world.

I let the radiant full stream flow past  
me

And in my desert thirst for the mirage.

MATH.

There are three figures in the picture.

All

Are beautiful. Which is Sakuntala ?

KING.

Which do you think ?

MATH.

She who is leaning there,  
A little tired, against that mango tree,  
Whose fresh leaves sparkle with the  
water she

Has poured on them. Her arms with  
infinite grace

Stretch out, her face just flushing with  
the heat,

And a few flowers fall straying from  
her hair

That has become unknotted and hangs  
down

Her neck. Yes, that must be Sakun-  
tala,

And the others are the two maids that  
attend her.

KING. You are good at guessing.

MATH. Look, a vagabond  
Honey-thief bee has settled on her  
mouth,  
Fancying it a rose-bud.

KING. Drive it off.

MATH. That is your business. Your pre-  
rogative  
Empowers you to punish all offenders,  
Even an impudent insect.

KING. Very true.  
Listen, you wanton wanderer, you  
bold bee!

Dare on those lips presumptuously to  
taste

What once I tasted, sweeter than all  
honey,

And I will cage you in this lotus  
cup.

MATH. It seems he does not care much for  
your threats  
And terrors. Why, it is only a painted  
bee.

KING. Painted ! Impossible ! Why, why do  
you wake me ?  
Leave me, now leave me alone with  
my vision.

*(KING sinks down overcome with grief)*

MATH. Fate plays with him most strangely.

*(Exit)*

VOICE. Help ! help !

KING. *(Listening)*

A cry of distress ! Fear not, fear  
not !

VOICE. Fear not ? Fear not ? How can I  
help fearing

When a monster twists my neck.

KING. Ho there, my bow !

*(Enter an arms-carrier. The KING snatches  
up bow and arrow)*

ANOTHER Here will I slay you, struggling, as a  
VOICE. tiger

Slays the deer, thirsting for its throat's  
fresh blood.

Pray to that king, that champion of  
the oppressed,  
That archer! Let Dushyanta save  
you now.

KING. What, he defies me too? Monster,  
avaunt!  
My arrow is aimed and it shall find  
you out.

*(Enter MATALI, holding MATHAVYA, whom  
he releases)*

MATALI. Indra ordains the demons for your  
mark.  
Against the demons let your bow be  
turned.  
Upon a friend not arrows should be  
aimed,  
But soft looks and the favour of the  
eyes.

KING. Matali! Welcome, Charioteer of  
Heaven.

MATH. Welcome! And he came near to  
murdering me.

MATALI. Great Prince, hear on what errand I  
am come  
From Indra, King of Heaven. There  
is a race  
Of Giants boasting them unconquer-  
able,  
Whom Devas, even, have failed to  
vanquish. Now  
Indra, the mighty, who deigns to call  
you friend,  
Appoints you their destroyer. The  
dark night  
No sun can enter, yet the moon  
subdues it.

KING. Indra has honoured me past my  
desert.  
But why that sudden violence put  
forth  
Against Mathavya, my poor friend ?

MATALI. I saw  
That the King's spirit was broken  
and bowed down  
By some affliction, so I chose the way

Of anger to arouse his lethargy.  
To wake a flame, the embers must be  
stirred.

The cobra must be angered ere he  
strike,

And even in bravest men courage  
will sleep

Until provoked it springs in its true  
shape.

KING. Mathavya, the command of Heaven's  
great king

Must be obeyed. Acquaint my  
minister

Pishuna with what's passed and say  
to him,

"Dushyanta to your care confides  
his Kingdom.

Guard you his people, while his bow  
is bent

Against the demon enemies of  
heaven."

MATALI. Noble prince, come. My chariot is  
at hand.

## SCENE III

*Golden Peak—the Hermitage of  
Kashyapa*

*(Enter KING DUSHYANTA and MATALI, alighting from the chariot that has borne them through the air)*

MATALI. We have come to earth, O King.

KING. Yet still I seem

Gliding along the wind, and glorying  
In the heavenly chariot's motion.

Matali,

Rushing through air what wondrous  
things I saw !

How from the mountains the earth  
shelved away

As the great peaks emerged ; and  
wrapt no more

In indistinguishable foliage, trees  
Towered up and showed the stature  
of their stems.



The rivers, that were narrowed into  
threads  
Of shining silver, broadened their  
green banks ;  
And momentarily grown nearer, all the  
earth  
Was by some unseen power flung up  
to me.

MATALI. There is strange beauty in earth  
revisited.

KING. I have fulfilled the task that Heaven's  
King  
Laid on me, all unworthy that I am  
To be so singled. By his side he bade  
me

In presence of the companies of  
heaven

Be seated on a throne; and on my head  
He set a garland of immortal bloom.

MATALI. What lesser meed were worthy ? For  
this day

Your arrows have driven down to  
darkness all

The demon brood that harried Indra's  
peace.

Glory is yours in Heaven.

KING.

Indra's the praise,  
Who chose me for his instrument.  
But see !

Yesterday, passing this way, all my  
thought

Was on the demons and the hour of  
battle.

I marked not then how marvellous  
appears

The world of mortals from this moun-  
tain top.

Matali, say, what aery peak is this  
That like a cloud above the sunken  
sun

Streams molten gold, and plunges  
east and west

Into the dim far seas !

MATALI.

The Golden Peak  
This is, where saints attain their  
mightiest power,

And the renowned sage, Kashyapa,  
dwells, —

Marichi's son, with Aditi, his wife, —  
Sequestered in such purity of peace  
As passes even the peace of Indra's  
heaven.

KING. I marvel at this place, pilgrim-desired,  
Which hermits in their far haunts  
hope to win  
Through pain of long austerities ; for  
here  
Sages are feasted by mere air, so fine  
A faculty they use, so magical  
The breath is of this paradise ; they  
make  
Happy ablution of their limbs in  
water  
Brown with the dust of golden  
lotuses ;  
They meditate on gem-veined marble  
slabs,  
And in bright presence of the nymphs  
of heaven

Are ignorant of passion. Matali,  
I must not move my feet from such  
a place  
Ere I do reverence to this holy  
ground.

MATALI. Tarry awhile, then, King. The  
chariot waits. (MATALI retires)

KING. There's no hope of attaining my  
desire.

Why throb so vainly, arm of mine ?  
The bliss

Once refused, turns to misery's bitter  
taste.

VOICE. *Without*

Be not so naughty. You are too  
wilful.

KING. This is no place for petulant words.  
Who is it

That's chidden by that voice ? A  
child, but not

A child in weakness.

He drags a lion's cub from the  
mother's dug

It sucks at ; drags it off—the touseled  
mane

Tugging at his tight fist—to play with  
him.

*(Enter BHARATA, with SUVRATA and  
SURAMA)*

SUV. Naughty child, why do you tease my  
lion cub,  
Opening his mouth ?

BHAR. I want to count his teeth.

SUV. Do you not know we care for the wild  
creatures

Like our own children in this hermit-  
age ?

No wonder the hermits call you the  
All-Tamer.

KING. Strange, how my heart goes out to-  
wards this boy

As if he were my own. Is it because  
I have no child, that this one moves  
me so ?

SUV. The lioness will spring at you, if  
you tease her baby.

BHAR. Let her come. I do not fear her.

KING. What fire is in the child ! Blow but  
the spark,  
And power will glow and burst from  
him like flame.

SUV. If you promise not to torment our  
pet, I will give you something else to  
play with.

BHAR. Where is it ? Give it me first.

*(He stretches out his hand)*

KING. He has the imperial birth-mark on his  
hand !

SUV. Mere words will not content him.  
Go to my cottage and get me that  
coloured peacock, the Sakunta.

*(ATTENDANT goes out)*

BHAR. No, no, I will play with the young lion.

KING. My heart goes out to this rebellious boy.  
Ah, happy father, happy mother, who  
Carrying their little son, are soiled  
with dust  
Rubbed from his body ; it nestles  
with fond faith

Into their lap, the refuge that he  
craves—

The white buds of his teeth just  
visible

When he breaks out into a causeless  
smile,

And he attempts sweet wordless  
sounds, and babbles

Things melting the heart more than  
any word.

SUV. Kind sir, will you come hither a  
moment and help me with this unruly  
boy ?

KING. Listen, O little son of a great saint,  
How is it your behaviour so affronts  
The peace this grove inherits, and  
your father's

Rule of unaltering mildness ? Why  
offend

This peace with violence—like the  
black snake's brood

That nest in the sweet-scented sandal  
tree ?

SUV. Noble sir, he is not the son of a saint.  
KING. His bearing and behaviour tell me  
that.

SUV. Wonderful ! Wonderful !

KING. What makes the wonder ?

SUV. I am amazed at such a speaking  
likeness  
Between you and the child, and more  
amazed  
To see what trust he has in you, a  
stranger.

KING. If he be not the son of the great sage,  
Tell me, of what blood comes he ?

SUV. Puru's blood.

KING. What, have we both a single ancestor ?  
It was by favour of the King of  
Heaven

I was permitted entrance in this  
place,

No mortal else could enter. How  
then comes

This human child here ?

SUV. Cease to wonder, sir.



His mother had a heavenly nymph for  
mother,

And in this hallowed wood she gave  
him birth.

KING. Strange, how my hope pricks upward  
once again.

Tell me, how was that prince named,  
whom her hand

Honoured in marriage?

SUV. Who would speak the name  
Of one so heartless that he could  
disown

His very wife?

KING. Ah, such a word paints me.  
Would that I dared to ask the mother's  
name!

*(Enter SURAMA with Peacock)*

SURAMA. Look, All-Tamer! Here is the bird,  
the Sakunta.

Isn't the Sakunta lovely?

BHAR. My mother! Where is she? Let me  
go to her.

SUV. He mistook the word Sakunta for Sakuntala. The boy loves his mother fondly.

SURAMA. Nay, child; I said, "Is not the Sakunta lovely?" I meant this peacock.

KING. What! Is his mother's name Sakuntala? Yet among women the name's not so rare.

BHAR. I like this peacock. Can it fly?

SUV. Alas, alas! I do not see the amulet on his wrist.

KING. Be not distressed. Here it is.

*(Stoops to pick it up)*

SUV. Stop! Do not touch it!

SURAMA. How marvellous! How strange! I must go and tell his mother.

KING. Why did you seek to stop my touching it?

SUV. The divine son of Marichi gave the child

This amulet, called the Invincible;

It has strange virtue in it. If it fall,  
None but his father or his mother can  
Touch it, and not be hurt.

KING. If some one else  
Touched it, what then ?

SUV. It changes to a serpent  
And stings him.

KING. Have you seen such transformation  
With your own eyes ?

SUV. O many, many times.

KING. Joy, joy. Is it my dearest hope come  
true ?

BHAR. (To KING)  
Don't hold me. I want to go to my  
mother.

KING. My son, we'll go together to greet  
your mother.

BHAR. Dushyanta is my father, and not you.

KING. His contradiction only assures me more.

BHAR. My mother comes. Mother !

KING. O, it is she.  
She comes, all clouded in her weeds of  
gray,

Her pale cheeks thinned with peni-  
tential tears,

Her hair up-knotted in a single braid,  
Chaste in her mien as in her mind.

Alas,

So she prolongs her vows of separation  
From me, who without mercy turned  
from her.

*(Enter SAKUNTALA from distance, with her  
long hair twisted into a simple braid)*

SAKUN. Where is the stranger who could  
touch with his hand the amulet of my  
child and not be dead ?

BHAR. Mother, who is this man ? He  
embraced me and called me his son.

SAKUN. O my heart ! Is it my lord indeed ?

KING. O my beloved !

SAKUN. Victory, Victory ! *(Her voice breaks)*

KING. Tears choke the words that you would  
greet me with.

I have found you. I have found you.  
All is won.

BHAR. Who is he, mother ?

SAKUN. Ask of Fate, my child.

KING. O ease your soul, Love, of its bitterness.

My mind was darkened, when I knew  
you not.

SAKUN. Rise, husband, noble husband. Think  
not blame

Of your heart. No, it was my own  
ill deeds,

In some past life committed, that  
brought down

That judgment on me. How else  
could my husband,

He who was ever kind, have been so  
cruel ?

Tell me how came it that the memory  
Of that unhappy wife returned to  
you ?

KING. When my heart's anguish is a little  
eased

And its wounds closed, then will I  
tell you all.

SAKUN. It is the ring, the ring of recognition.

KING. The moment I recovered it, I knew,  
And memory rushed back. Take it  
again,  
As the tree takes its blossom once  
afresh

In token of reunion with the Spring.

SAKUN. Nay, keep it. I can never trust it  
more.

KING. Tell me, Beloved, how came you to  
this place ?

SAKUN. Menaka, my celestial mother, knowing  
Of my misfortune and unhappiness  
Carried me hither, and confided me  
To the holy Aditi.

*(Enter MATALI)*

MATALI. Hail, puissant prince,  
Happy to find your queen, to see your  
son !

Heaven's Regent, to whom all is  
known, sends you,

Sakuntala, his blessing ; and he bids  
you

Blame not the king. Durvasa's curse  
it was

That drowned his memory, and that  
curse yourself

Brought, by neglect of honour to a  
guest.

So in the spell of that strong curse  
confined

Did he reject you. But the cloud has  
passed

Like tarnish on a mirror from his  
heart,

And there again you triumph and you  
shine,

As in the glass your image.

KING.

I am cleared then.

SAKUN.

O then it was not of his own free will  
That he disowned me !

KING.

This is my own son,  
He shall become the pillar of my  
house.

He shall be called Bharata, and his  
name

Shall be the name of all my land.

MATALI.

Great King,

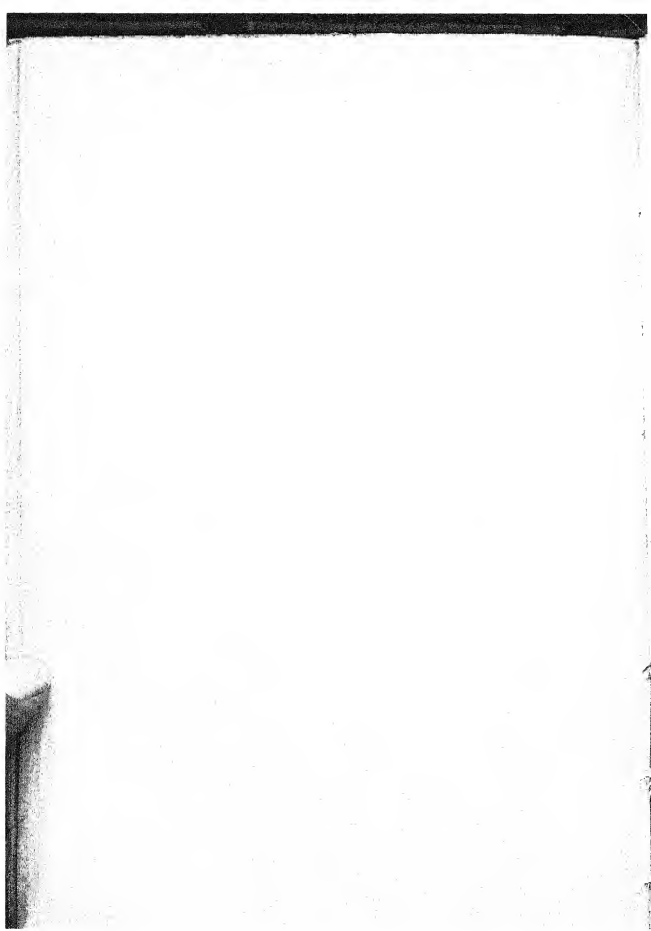
Come, and your wife and child with  
you. Ascend

The car of Indra. To your royal city !

*(Exeunt)*

THE END





*Under the Auspices of The Union of East and West.*

## THE INDIAN ART AND DRAMATIC SOCIETY

Presented for two Matinees on the 14th and 21st November 1919, at the  
Winter Garden Theatre, London

Under the distinguished patronage of  
His Royal Highness THE DUKE OF CONNAUGHT

# 'SAKUNTALA'

Written about 1600 years ago by KALIDASA.

English Version by LAURENCE BINYON.

The adaptation for the Stage by K. N. DAS GUPTA.

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CAST—In the order of their appearance.

### IN THE PROLOGUE—

<i>Benediction by</i> . . .	MARTAND BHAGVAT.
<i>Stage Manager</i> . . .	LEWIS CASSON.
<i>Actress</i> . . .	SYBIL THORNDIKE.

### IN THE PLAY—

<i>Dushyanta—King of India</i> . . .	ARTHUR WONTNER.
<i>Sarngarava</i> } <i>Hermits</i> . . .	{ HOWARD ROSE.
<i>Saradvata</i> } <i>Maidens of the</i> . . .	{ FRANCIS ROBERTS.
<i>Sakuntala</i> } <i>Hermitage</i> } . . .	{ SYBIL THORNDIKE.
<i>Anasuya</i> } <i>Hermitage</i> } . . .	{ COLETTE ONIEL.
<i>Priyavada</i> } <i>Hermitage</i> } . . .	{ MURIEL PRATT.
<i>Mathavya—The King's Jester</i> } . . .	BRUCE WINSTON.
<i>and Companion</i> } . . .	JACK STUART.
<i>Karabhaka—A Messenger</i> . . .	LILIAN MOWBRAY.
<i>Gautami—Matron of the Hermitage</i> . . .	CALEB PORTER.
<i>Durvasa—A Great Sage and Hermit</i> . . .	GORDON BAILEY.
<i>Kanva—The Father of the Hermitage</i> . . .	MONICA SCOTT.
<i>A Singer</i> . . .	BREMER WILLS.
<i>The King's Chaplain</i> . . .	HUGH BAYLY.
<i>1st Policeman</i> . . .	JACK STUART.
<i>and Policeman</i> . . .	ARCHIBALD McLEAN.
<i>Fisherman</i> . . .	FRANK SNELL.
<i>Superintendent of Police</i> . . .	PATRICIA CLIVE.
<i>Vetravati—Attendant on the King</i> . . .	VICTORIA DRUMMOND.
<i>Two Dancers</i> . . .	{ BEATRICE RICHMOND.
<i>(Radha Krishna Spring Dance)</i> } . . .	{ KITTY BAIRD.
<i>Madhurika</i> . . .	GEORGE ZUCCO.
<i>Matali—Charioteer of Heaven</i> . . .	EVELYN GREY.
<i>Suvata</i> } <i>Nurses</i> . . .	{ ROSAMUND CROUDACE.
<i>Surama</i> } <i>Nurses</i> . . .	{ CHRISTOPHER CASSON.
<i>Bharata—Child of Dushyanta</i> . . .	

The Play produced by LEWIS CASSON.

The Scenery designed and made by BRUCE WINSTON.

The Music (with the exception of the Dance and the Song in Scene 2, Part 2) specially composed by JOHN H. FOULDS, and played under his direction.

Music of Song in Scene 2, Part 2, by the Rev. B. HALE WORTHAM.

Stage Manager—PHYLLIS HILLER.

Some of the Artists appear by permission of—Miss Marie Lohr, and Messrs. Henry Ainley, Arthur Bourchier, André Charlot, Arthur Collins, J. B. Fagan, Gilbert Miller.

The Society is grateful to Mr. W. LOFTUS HARE for help with the dresses.

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